STEPHAN, JULIE B., Ph.D. School Environment and Coping Resources: A Predictive Model of School Counselor Burnout. (2005)
Directed by Dr. L. DiAnne Borders. 266 pp.

The relationship of school environment and counselor coping resources to school counselor burnout was investigated in this dissertation study by testing a hypothesized path model among a sample of school counselors certified in North Carolina and currently working in the state's public middle schools. The model, created by the researcher based on an in-depth study of the burnout literature, posited that factors within the school environment (counselor perceptions of *school climate, role conflict, role ambiguity)* have a direct effect on school counselor burnout and an indirect effect on burnout mediated by counselor coping resources. The role of counselor coping resources (s*elf-efficacy*, *social support* , and *behavioral problem-solving)* was examined for indications of mediating or moderating effects. Burnout was measured as a three-dimensional construct comprised of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment. 414 school counselors completed a mailed, 95-item, self-report booklet. 131 of the participants worked in rural schools, whereas 283 had positions within a non-rural context. Statistical analyses, including structural equation modeling, revealed that the counselors' perception of the school environment (climate of support, role conflict, and role ambiguity) predicted two dimensions of counselor burnout: emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Support was not found for the hypothesis that counselor coping resources (self-efficacy, social support, and behavioral problem-solving) played a significant role in the relationship between school environment and burnout. A number of statistically significant differences were found

between rural and non-rural school counselors. However, for both groups, role conflict was negatively correlated to self-efficacy and positively correlated to behavioral problem-solving, emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization. Role ambiguity was positively related to depersonalization. Self-efficacy was significantly and positively correlated to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, indicating that very high expectations of oneself contribute to burnout. Relatedly, those who reported resolving problems through action were more likely to see themselves as successful but also more likely to report distancing themselves from others while performing those tasks. The implications for school counselors, policymakers, and counselor educators are discussed, and recommendations for future research are provided.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND COPING RESOURCES:

A PREDICTIVE MODEL OF SCHOOL COUNSELOR

BURNOUT

by

Julie B. Stephan

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
2005

Approved by

_____

Dr. L. DiAnne Borders, Committee Chair

To the school counselors across America

who strive to meet so many needs for a diverse population of students.

This one's for you...

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the

Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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Date of Final Oral Examination

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without a doubt, this dissertation would never have reached completion without the unwavering commitment of Dr. DiAnne Borders, who read manuscript after manuscript with meticulous care and unflinching resolve in the face of tight deadlines. I am forever in your debt! Thanks also to my committee members: Dr. Craig S. Cashwell, always present for additional insight, humor, and reflections; Dr. Terry A. Ackerman, unfailingly kind and helpful when presented with a flurry of questions about statistical procedures; and Dr. Garrett W. Lange, who offered his perspective with wit, candor, and great timing. It has been a privilege to work with such outstanding professionals.

Additionally, I would like to thank my doctoral cohort of friends: Casey A. Barrio, Melissa Murray Canter, Daniel M. Paredes, Michael K. Pisarcik, Christopher T. Pisarik, and P. Clay Rowell. Each of you helped me instrumentally, unexpectedly, unreservedly, and consistently. Special thanks to Dr. Cathleen M. Barrett for her inspiration, encouragement, and friendship. Last—but certainly not least—I would like to acknowledge the blessing I have been given through the continued presence of my family and friends in Texas. Throughout the doctoral program and dissertation process, your enduring support, familiar laughter, and that distinctive twang were but a call away. It made all the difference.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Demands for increased financial and educational accountability and productivity have become a powerful movement within the school counseling profession (George, 1986; Ibrahim, Helms, & Thompson, 1983). In response to this movement and the national call for control over work activities, role definition, and a proactive policy on service to students, the American School Counseling Association (2003) published its *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs*. In this document, ASCA defined school counselors' mission as enhancing the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students. ASCA argued that counseling programs must be a central part of the educational institution, and that knowledge and skills for all students must be identified and delivered in a purposeful, systematic, and comprehensive manner, and one in which the holistic development of students is emphasized. Important themes of the National Model include infused intentionality, leadership, advocacy, collaboration, efficiency, effectiveness, proactive prevention, and flexibility.

This new initiative from the organization that advocates for more than 16,000 professional school counselors around the globe is an indication that school counselors themselves must adopt a more proactive form of professional identity in their dealings with school officials and administrators (ASCA, 2003). Significantly, the ASCA Model

challenges the existing duties of school counselors, specifying that they should not be relegated to tasks such as scheduling (except in advisory roles), testing or teaching, disciplining students or monitoring detention, nor engaged in the myriad clerical tasks rampant in schools. Instead, it is recommended that school counselors spend 80% of their time in direct service to students. Further, it is specified that one counselor for every 250 students generally would be the best ratio in school settings. However, implementation of the ASCA Model may be just another potentially overwhelming task for the majority of school counselors (Schwallie-Giddis, ter Maat, & Pak, 2003; Sparks & Taft, 2004), who have been inundated with tasks and pressure, as well as caseloads of students with increasingly urgent needs (Johnson & Johnson, 2003).

Certainly, school counseling programs have undergone tremendous change over the last fifty years. Originally mandated under the necessity for vocational guidance within schools, counseling programs have evolved greatly. Counselors were expected to alter their focus on vocational preparation to a focus on personal growth, and from responding to for student crises to emphasizing normal development and academic success (Paisley & Borders, 1995). As Johnson and Johnson (2003) noted, over the decades counselors' primary focus changed multiple times. The dropout problem was the concern of the 1960s, replaced somewhat by the movement to address career needs during the 1970s. The issues related to drug and substance abuse became important targets in the 1980s. Other changes during this time such as the emergence of AIDS as a societal ill, economic declines, increases in suicide rates, and increases in the national divorce rate further added to counselors' already enormous responsibilities. School

counselors in the 1990s were expected to address school safety and violence. With so many concerns, today's school counselors are overwhelmed (Emerson & Markos, 1996).

Near the dawn of the 21st Century, a large number of authors in professional journals recounted stressful situations in school counseling (Boy & Pine, 1980; Kendrick & Chandler, 1994; Moracco, Butcke, & McEwen, 1984; Morrissette, 2000; Neely & Iburg, 1989; Stickel, 1991). In fact, because of isolation and an enormous workload, school counselors may be at an increased chance for diminished competence and burnout (Crutchfield & Borders, 1997). Indeed, researchers warn that school counselors are at an extremely high risk for stagnation and burnout (Bacharach, Baucer, & Conley, 1986; Kim, 1993; Lambie, 2002).

Burnout

Burnout has been called "the disease of modern life" (Maslach, 1982). It was originally conceptualized as a condition of "physical and emotional exhaustion, involving the development of negative self-concept, negative job attitude, and loss of concern and feeling for clients" (Pines & Maslach, 1978, p. 2). It is a syndrome of behavior that has been investigated in a variety of professions (Savicki & Cooley, 1982), although mostly for those professions in which people have continuing contact with others who are in trouble or have problems (i.e., the helping professions such as counseling, teaching, nursing, social work, psychiatry, and psychology).

Multiple definitions of burnout exist, but it has been established that the burnout phenomenon is composed of degrees or levels of impairment (Schaufeli, Marek, & Maslach, 1993). Patrick (1979) divided the symptoms of burnout into four distinct

domains of dysfunction: physical, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. Physical symptoms include chronic fatigue; higher incidence of illness and psychosomatization; insomnia or increased need for sleep; and increases in substance abuse, eating disorders, and alcoholism. Cognitive symptoms commonly manifest as cynicism, negative attitudes towards work, stereotyping and depersonalization of other people, and negative self-concept. Emotional symptoms include emotional liability and exhaustion; low morale; feelings of helplessness; a reduced sense of personal accomplishment; chronic depression and/or increased anxiety; irritability, restlessness, tension, anger, and paranoia; and pessimism, hopelessness, apathy, boredom, and/or existential meaninglessness. Loss of faith, hope, and meaning; despair and estrangement; and changes in values, beliefs, and religion also have been noted (Grosch & Olsen, 1994). Behavioral symptoms are typified by complaining, withdrawal from clients, poor work performance and productivity, interpersonal conflicts and strained work relationships, tardiness, absenteeism, and quitting the position or profession (Gann, 1979; Jackson & Maslach, 1982; Maslach, 1976, 1978, 1979; Maslach & Jackson, 1978, 1979, 1981; Maslach & Pines, 1977; Pines & Maslach, 1978). In a systematic review of research studies of burnout, Maher (1983) defined the burned out professional as exhibiting at least two of the above symptoms.

The majority of definitions of burnout focus on external variables of stress within the environment. More recently, the internal components contributing to burnout have been acknowledged. Grosch and Olsen (1994) described three possible causes of burnout: intrapsychic causes, having to do with personality; system or environmental causes; and the interaction of the two. A supportive environment decreases the likelihood

of burnout (Pines, 1993), in addition to organizational factors theorized to affect burnout. Personal characteristics such as ego development, coping style, professional expectations, and social and economic factors within the system also have been studied (Lynch, 1999). However, most researchers have focused primarily on singular predictors of burnout (one per study, ignoring other known predictors) rather than simultaneous multiple predictors and their interactional influences on burnout (Kottler & Hazier, 1996). Thus, no integrated model of burnout and its prevention has been developed, although such complex, concurrent influences are more reflective of the real world of the school counselor.

School Counselors and Burnout

School counselor burnout has been defined as "a reduced sense of personal accomplishment, wherein the individual blames himself [sic]—not the circumstances—for his feelings, emotional and physical exhaustion, occupational fatigue, cynical attitudes, depersonalization toward or withdrawal from clients, chronic depression, and/or increased anxiety; interpersonal conflicts and strained work relationships, low morale and productivity, physical complaints, and a strong tendency toward substance abuse" (Kesler, 1990, p. 303). Burnout may take the form of loss of empathy, respect, and positive feeling for students, parents/guardians, teachers, and other faculty (Emerson & Markos, 1996; Skorupa & Agresti, 1993; Swearingen, 1990). Loss of care and commitment may develop into detachment (Gann, 1979), leading to changes in thoughts or feelings about the client that lead to depersonalization (Maslach, 1977). Depersonalization is disengagement from clients and all empathic responses to them

(Skovholt, 2001). Alarmingly, the very qualities of the counselor often thought to be the most important of therapeutic tools (Luborsky, McLellan, Woody, O'Brien, & Auerbach, 1985; Pope, 1996) are greatly affected by the degree of burnout experienced (Morrissette, 2000).

The four stages of counselor burnout, as characterized by Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) include (a) enthusiasm—the tendency to be overly available and over-identify with clients; (b) stagnation—the school counselor's expectations shrink to normal proportions and personal discontent begins to surface; (c) frustration—problems seem to multiply and the helper becomes bored, less tolerant, less sympathetic, and copes by avoiding and withdrawing from relationships; and (d) apathy—characterized by depression and listlessness. The manifestation of each stage affects the school counselor, school services provided, and the school in general.

Kesler (1990) said school counselors are most susceptible to burnout because of high levels of professional stress due to their various job demands, role ambiguity, role conflict, large numbers of students, and lack of supervision. School counselors' responsibilities are many and wide-ranging, and such symptoms interfere with how they execute their duties and act within the system (Sheffield, 1999). Counselor burnout has been found to correlate with negative attitudes toward clients (Ackerly, Burnell, Holder, & Kurdek, 1988). Therefore, burnout has potentially serious consequences for everyone involved in the educational enterprise (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), as it influences how school counselors relate to students, parents, and school staff; impacts the well-being of school counselors; and affects absenteeism and retention. However, there has been

some question regarding exactly how organizational factors within the school (Kim, 1993; Lambie, 2002) and the needs of the client population affect school counselor burnout.

Special Considerations of the Client Population and Context

Several researchers have found that middle school counselors evidence high levels of burnout, with especially high indices of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Lambie, 2002). The special issues of the population of students in middle schools may give some insight into this finding. There is substantial evidence of declines in academic motivation and achievement across the early-adolescence years (especially for those from 11 to 14 years of age). The declines in motivation and grades coincide with the transition into middle and/or junior high school (Anderman & Maehr, 1994; Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Eccles et al., 1993; Maehr & Midgley, 1996; Simmons & Blyth, 1987). Drops have been reported in middle-schoolers' interest in school (Epstein & McPartland, 1976), intrinsic motivation (Harter, 1981), perceptions of self and confidence in academics (Wigfield, Eccles, Mac Iver, Reuman, & Midgley, 1991), their expectations that they will master subjects (Anderman & Midgley, 1997), and how much they perceive themselves to belong as prized members within their school (Anderman, 1999). Test anxiety increases (Wigfield & Eccles, 1989), as does middle-schoolers' ruminations and time spent in critical judgment of self (Nicholls, 1990). As students' goals for high-quality performance go down (Anderman & Midgley, 1997), truancy and dropout rates peak (Rosenbaum, 1976). Students from some ethnic groups and low socioeconomic status (SES) homes tend to experience more academic failure and drop

out more often than non-minority, non-low SES peers (Eccles et al., 1993). These changes may not be extreme for every adolescent, but the evidence of declines in academic motivation, behavior, and self-perception over the early adolescent years is startling. One wonders what is happening to children as they approach this milestone, and many researchers have devoted their time to investigating developmental problems.

There are several explanations for these changes. Young adolescent development may impede emotional development and amplify affective reactivity during early adolescence (Arnett, 1999), or perhaps simultaneous occurrence of a number of life changes is the culprit. Simmons and Blyth (1987) attributed student grade declines to the timing of the transition from elementary school and into to middle school/junior high school. For girls especially, this timing coincides with pubertal development. Another avenue of investigation relates to the changes in students that are produced by lack of a developmentally appropriate educational environment (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). Students' desires for autonomy at this time are often out of kilter with their perceptions of realistic freedom within schools (Mac Iver & Reuman, 1988). Additionally, increases in school size and lack of teacher supervision may contribute to the problems (Simmons & Blyth, 1987). Authoritarian instruction by teachers and administrators may interfere with students' strivings for personal control (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

Teachers themselves exert influence on the middle school student. For example, middle school teachers on average have less confidence in their own teaching efficacy than do elementary teachers (i.e., their ability to teach and influence all students; Feldlaufer, Midgley, & Eccles, 1988; Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989). There is also

evidence that they have a different view of their job description. Roeser and Midgley (1997) found that middle school teachers are less likely to believe they should monitor students' mental health.

Thus, at a time when adolescents need more support and guidance from adults, teachers are less likely to be affectively present, especially given their expectations and training, student enrollment, and the school structure. Lack of positive, meaningful interactions interferes with student success (Simmons & Blyth, 1987). The middle school counselor, then, must try to fill the gaps, even though in most middle schools the counselor/student ratio is well above the 1:250 recommendations (ASCA, 2003).

In addition, Roeser and Eccles (1998) found that students' belief that their school rewards students only for academic ability leads to declines in students' educational values, achievement, and self-esteem and increases their anger, depressive symptoms, and school truancy. Passage of *No Child Left Behind* (2002) by Congress—a mandate for standardized testing of all students and increased accountability of teachers, counselors, and administrators for student learning—is thought to contribute to an atmosphere that emphasizes ability-based evaluations. Such evaluations have been shown to increase stress for all participants in the educational enterprise (Paisley & McMahon, 2001). Counselors, in particular, may be adversely affected, as the school counselor may be the only individual who recognizes the importance of focusing on students' personal development as well as on their academic achievement (George, 1986; Jones, 1989; Van Ripper, 1971).

As a group, adolescents are one of the highest risk populations in the U.S. One in four is considered to be "at risk" of a myriad of negative outcomes: school failure, delinquency, early and/or unprotected sexual intercourse, or substance abuse (Rubenstein & Zager, 1995). All of these issues can cause adolescents to become resistant in the counseling relationship (Hanna, Hanna, & Keys, 1999). A report from the National Institute of Medicine (National Advisory Mental Health Council, 1990) estimated that 15% to 22% of the nation's 63 million children and adolescents have mental health problems severe enough to require treatment, yet fewer than 20% receive mental health services (Tuma, 1989; Zill & Schoenborn, 1990). Additionally, this study further indicated that children in recent years tend to manifest mental health problems at an earlier age.

The needs of students requiring mental health professionals in schools have increased dramatically. Suicide and other forms of death and violence complicate the workload of today's school counselors and require additional clinical skills (Thompson, 1995). Until recently, depression in children was very rare (Lewinsohn & Essau, 2002), yet the American Psychiatric Association (1992) estimated that 3 to 6 million children suffer from clinical depression and are at high risk for suicide. The number of children admitted to psychiatric hospitals tripled in the United States during the late eighties from 17,000 to 43,000. Despite growing numbers, most community mental health services are isolated. They are not considered in school policy, are quite costly, and may be inaccessible to many students and families (Lockhart & Keys, 1998). In rural schools,

defined as those schools falling outside consolidated statistical areas, this may be particularly true.

Rural Americans are significantly poorer than those in metropolitan areas. For example, in 1999, the rural household poverty rate was 16% compared with 13% in metropolitan counties. Additionally, 26% of rural residents lived just above poverty, compared with 18% of non-rural residents (Huang, 1999). Rural African-Americans and Native Americans have historically suffered greater rates of poverty (35% and 36% respectively, compared with 12% among rural white Americans). Twenty-four percent of rural children live in poverty, compared to 22% of their non-rural peers. Additionally, there are just as many homeless people in rural areas, and half of rural homeless households are families with children. Many more rural homeless families are headed by females (32% rural compared to 16% non-rural). Vissing (1996) warns that although there are more homeless children in rural areas, less attention is paid to them.

Rural schools, half of U.S. public schools, employ 40% of the teachers to educate 27% of the school children. However, they receive only 22% of the dollars spent on education (Saba, 1991). Increased costs lead to rural school systems providing fewer programs and services, and the overall condition of school facilities is poorer (Dewees, 1999). These schools experience teacher, counselor, and administrator shortages (Beeson & Strange, 2000), partially due to lower salaries (NCES, 1998). Rural school counselors tend to be younger, less educated, and slightly less experienced than their urban peers (Gibbs, 2000; Sutton, 1989). These less experienced counselors report they are more

socially, culturally, and professionally isolated than their non-rural colleagues (Collins, 1999).

Rural school counselors may find themselves unprepared to face the challenges of their clientele. According to the Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA, 2000), rural eighth graders are much more likely to try drugs than their non-rural peers: 104% more likely to use amphetamines, 50% more likely to use cocaine, and 34% more likely to use crack. Additionally, they are more likely to use the "gateway drugs." They are 29% more likely to drink alcohol, 70% more likely to have been drunk, nearly five times more likely to dip tobacco, and more than twice as likely to smoke cigarettes. Since 1990, drug law violations increased more in rural than in non-rural communities (CASA, 2000). At the same time, rural areas are less equipped to deal with the consequences. Medical and mental health services are limited, and due to the logistics of living in these areas within families of low socioeconomic status, rural children may be less likely to receive medical attention (Perroncel, 2000; Sherman, 1992).

Student achievement and success in rural schools also appears to be suffering. Rural students drop out of school at a much higher rate (12.7%) than non-rural students (Sherman, 1992; United States Department of Commerce, 1998); fewer return to complete high school or earn a GED (Perroncel, 2000); and only 54% of rural students apply to college, compared with 62% of their non-rural peers (Stern, 1994). Additionally, crime levels in rural areas are at all-time highs (Donnermeyer, 1995). Peterson, Beekley, Speaker, and Pietrzak (1998) found that nearly half of their student subjects had personally experienced some form of school-related violence at least once

between the years of 1995 and 1997; they also reported increases in violence at all school levels.

Increases in crime, violence, and numbers of individuals in need of mental health services, coincide with a diminished availability of public and private services. Thus, school counselors may be in the critical position of serving as the only mental health service provider for many families. Certainly, counselors provide necessary support to students (Bentley, 1968; Lopez-Meisel, 1977) and are generally the first contacted by other school professionals when students are known to experience psychological pain. Continuous exposure to pain increases the likelihood that counselors will experience burnout (Ackerley, Burnell, Holder, & Kurdek, 1988; Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980; Kottler, 1986; Maslach, 1976; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Pines & Aronson, 1988; Schaufeli, Marek, & Maslach, 1993; Skaggs, 1999). Even school counselors' ability to be empathic may have some effect on their susceptibility (Larson, 1993). Unfortunately, the lack of supervised guidance by clinical administrators complicates the issue (Rubstein & Zager, 1995).

Morrissette (2000) indicated that school counselors are the most stressed of counselors, but literature on their concerns is "dated and sparse." Despite the costs to the profession and public, minimal attempts have been made to delineate the specific factors that negatively impact school counselors (Kendrick & Chandler, 1994). Moracco, Butcke, and McEwan (1984) pointed out that little information regarding work-related issues of school counselors has been researched and instead is usually referred to through personal reflections. Several researchers have called for more thorough investigations of

the organizational or systemic conditions that affect middle school counselors (Cole, 1988; George, 1986; Jones, 1989; Kim, 1993), as well as personal qualities that may impact burnout susceptibility (Freudenberger & Richelson, 1980; Lambie, 2002). Other researchers have requested a more extensive look at the differences between school counselors in rural and non-rural settings (Sutton, 1988; Sutton & Southworth, 1990). Additionally, there is a need to look at individual as well as situational factors that may assist in the development of solutions, such as helping school counselors integrate more effective coping skills that can help prevent development of burnout (Tiedeman, 1977).

Statement of the Problem

Counselors and other human services professionals are at higher risk of burnout than are individuals in other occupations (DeVoe, Spicuzza, & Baskind, 1983; Edelwich & Brodsky, 1980; Freudenberger, 1975; Gold, 1983; Iwanicki & Schwab, 1981; Maslach, 1976; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Pines, Aronson, & Kafry, 1981; Poliks, 1990; Riggar, 1985). The number of dysfunctional or impaired counselors in schools is quite high (Kottler & Hazier, 1996; Sheffield, 1999; Skaggs, 1999). Impaired counselors may be a liability to the school, students, colleaguest, and themselves (Riggar, 1985). In their surveyed sample, Sears and Navin (1983) found that 65% of school counselors reported that their occupation was moderately or very stressful. In a study of educators and counselors conducted by Wood, Klein, Cross, Lammers, and Elliot (1985), 63% of participants indicated awareness of colleagues whose work was affected by their impairment, whereas 32% of the participants admitted their own feelings of burnout

interfered with work. The school counselor participants also reported the highest level of role conflict and were second in role ambiguity only to teachers.

It was projected in 1991 that over 6,000 (or ten percent of counselors then practicing in the United States) were having some type of emotional and/or psychological impairment that impeded their functioning (Borders, 1991; Kottler & Hazier, 1996). Other findings from national survey research studies have estimated the incidence of burnout to be about 39% for counselors (Ackerly, Burnell, Holder, & Kardek, 1988; Fishbach & Tidwell, 1994; Golembiewski & Munzenrider, 1988). In Connecticut public schools, school counselors reported the highest level of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization when compared to teachers, school social workers, and reading specialists (Pierson-Huney & Archamabult, 1987).

Impaired counselors function at less than an ideal level of professionalism and efficiency (Kottler & Hazier, 1996). Burnout can be an enormously distressing experience for the school counselor (Pines, Aronson, & Kafry, 1981) and has been found to be injurious to all facets of an individual's life (Anderson, 1985; Feldstein, 2000; Lambie, 2002). It is exceedingly costly to affected individuals and systems and has many forms (Maslach, 1978; Pines, 1993). Burnout is thought to greatly contribute to school counselor turnover, absenteeism, poor occupational performance, and negative morale (Maslach, 1976; Pines & Maslach, 1978). Furthermore, the quality of service to students, parents/guardians, and other school faculty progressively declines (Maslach & Pines, 1979).

Previous research on the correlates of school counselor burnout has been limited (Kim, 1993; Lambie, 2002). Individual variables have been researched as outcome variables without considering the role mediating demographic and personality factors play in influencing burnout. Meier (1983) argued that personal variables of burnout are equally as important as the environmental variables in understanding it. Lambie (2002) and Morrissette (2000) called for research that incorporates analyses of basic individual characteristics into studies of school counselors' levels of burnout. Maslach and Goldberg (1998) reiterated that new approaches must be developed to address the interaction of person and environment. Savicki and Cooley (1982) suggested that it is in the interaction of variables that answers to burnout lie. Therefore, what has been needed is a synthesized, structural model theorizing the relationship among factors considered to affect burnout rates. Thus, the goal of this study was to test the relationship between school environment, school counselor coping resources, and school counselor burnout.

Importantly, this is the first complex, integrated model of burnout for counselors. Several key contributions result from determining how the contributors to burnout operate for specific counselor groups and examining how the specified model fits the data, especially as most researchers have focused primarily on singular predictors of burnout (Kottler & Hazier, 1996). Such complex, concurrent influences are more reflective of the real world of the school counselor. Understanding the nature of these relationships provides school counselors and counselor educators with valuable information for proactive burnout prevention, as well as intervention services for

practicing school counselors. This model additionally has implications for counselors in other settings.

Need for the Study

This research is of vital importance because, ultimately, school counseling programs will be shaped by the people who implement them. Paisley and Borders (1995) noted that school counselors need to be visible and assertive in their role. Paisley and McMahon (2001) typified the ideal school counselor as coming from a CACREP program with prior experience in schools and as a person who exemplifies the concept of life-long learning. This person would be an effective clinician who understand normal human growth and development as well as special needs and psychopathology, and who can work effectively with a wide range of persons in many contexts. Moreover, this person would be an advocate and leader who would collaboratively work to see that student needs are met in an accountable manner. She or he would design a school counseling program with vision, yet retain humor and flexibility. Perhaps most importantly, the school counselor would know that self-care is essential. Certainly, this description is not that of a burned-out counselor.

We need counselors who exhibit educational leadership qualities in many areas - people who can transform school counseling programs through their personal qualities such as commitment, awareness, and courage (Paisley & McMahon, 2001). These personal qualities should be nurtured in the next generation of school counselors, and counselor educators must do their best to attract such people to school counseling programs. Counselor educators and supervisors have an ethical responsibility to inform

school counselors-in-training of the stressors and to work with them proactively to provide a booster shot against professional burnout. Therefore, it is of critical importance that researchers investigate the dynamics of the burnout syndrome so that the data can be used to identify approaches that may help ameliorate the problem, enabling school counselors to function at optimal rates of performance.

Purpose of the Study

The focus of this study was not to explore school counselor attrition, the loss of school counseling professionals due to the stresses and strains of the system, but instead to investigate the degree of burnout experienced by school counselors currently in the North Carolina school system and to explore some of the contributing factors to the problem in hopes that such research can lead to multiple interventions. School environmental factors, personal life factors, and coping resources of the school counselor were studied to in an effort to explicate how they are related to school counselor burnout. As such, a path model of these relationships was tested among a sample of middle school counselors. The model held that school counselor personal life factors and factors within the school environment directly influence school counselor burnout.

Testing of the proposed model allowed examination of other predictor variables (i.e., self-efficacy, social support from family and friends, and behavioral problem-solving) hypothesized to mediate or perhaps moderate the relationships between personal life factors and school counselor burnout, as well as factors within the school environment and school counselor burnout. Burnout was assessed following Maslach's

(1982) definition, which is composed of three factors: degree of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of personal accomplishment.

The primary goal of this study was to determine to what degree burnout could be accounted for by independent variables and their relationships—essentially, to examine how the specified model fit the data. The independent variables identified through the burnout literature and incorporated into the model are as follows: factors within the school environment (counselor perceptions of climate of support within the school, role conflict, and role ambiguity), and school counselor coping resources (self-efficacy, social support, and behavioral problem-solving).

Researchers within the helping professions have conducted a few examples of multivariate research on burnout; however, the majority examined one specific phenomenon rather than the function of many different constructs within a complex model. Each of the above constructs has been found to account for enough variance in burnout to avoid its rejection, but not enough to stand alone or to fuel substantive prevention or treatment programs for school counselors. Because efforts at investigating burnout have had generally positive results (Kim, 1993; Lambie, 2002), the current study was an effort to integrate individual school counselor qualities and organizational characteristics into a complex framework that increases understanding of burnout.

This study makes several contributions to the literature by providing a complex, integrated model of burnout. First, it adds to the literature on burnout that exists by synthesizing ideas that have been supported empirically in the helping and educational professions, and the model further aids understanding of the complex interaction of

contributing factors for all individuals. Secondly, understanding the nature of these relationships provides school counselors and counselor educators with valuable information for burnout prevention and intervention services.

Explanation of the Model

Figure 1 depicts the model that was tested empirically. The model, created by the researcher based on an in-depth study of the burnout and school counseling literature, posited that factors within the school environment [counselor perceptions of *school climate* (as measured by the researcher-created Climate of School Support Scale) and *role conflict* and *role ambiguity* (as measured by the Role Questionnaire; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970; Freeman & Coll, 1997)] have a direct effect (A) on school counselor burnout (as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory- Human Services Survey; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) and an indirect effect (B) on burnout mediated by school counselor coping resources. School counselor coping resources [*self-efficacy* (measured by the Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale; Fibel & Hale, 1978), *social support* (measured by the Multidimensional Support Scale; Winefield, Winefield, & Tiggerman, 1992), and *behavioral problem-solving* (measured by the Social Problem-Solving Inventory; D'Zurilla & Nezu, 1992)] were postulated to have a direct effect (C) on school counselor burnout.

Research Questions

The current study examined the following seven research questions:

RQ[1]: Does the Climate of School Support Scale (CSSS) represent one factor—that of school climate—for this sample of middle school counselors?

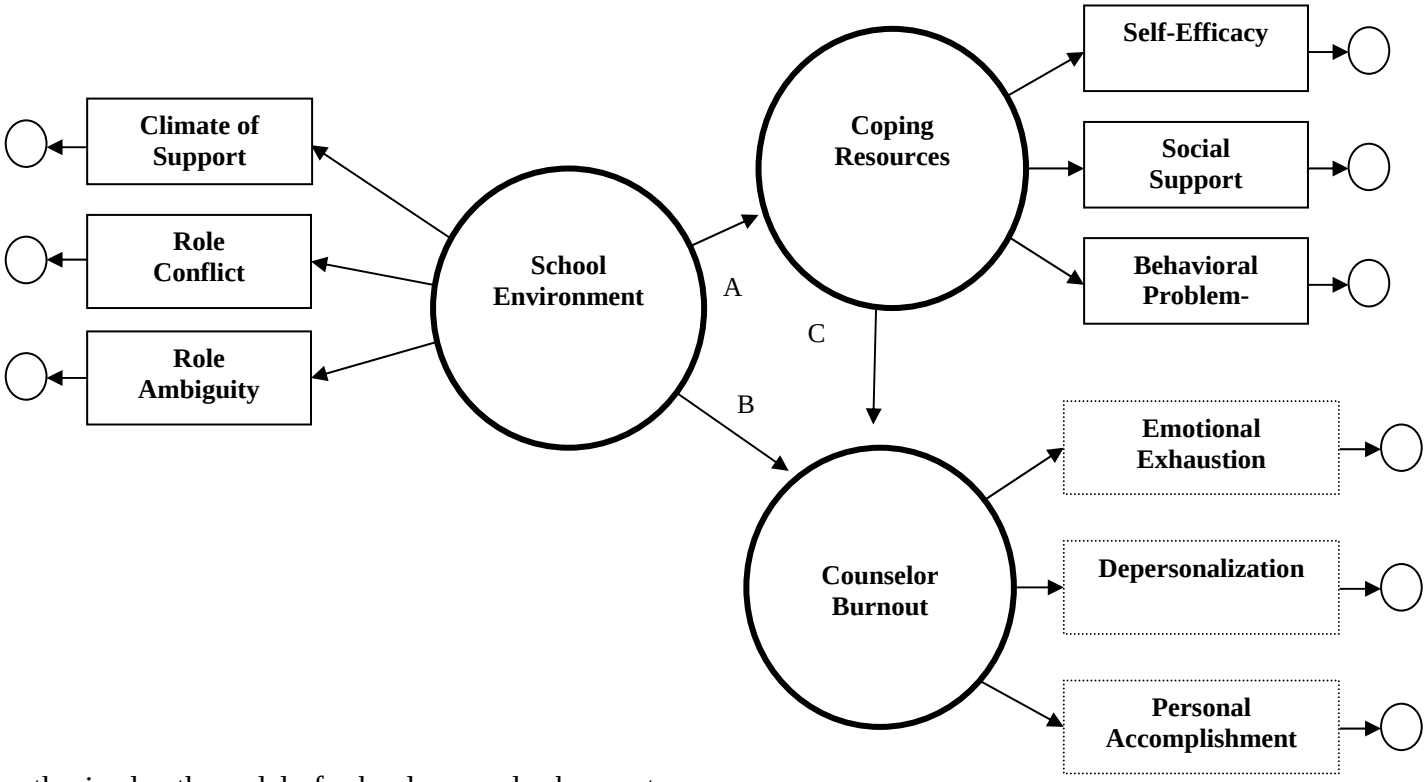


Figure 1. Hypothesized path model of school counselor burnout.

RQ[2]: Does the Role Questionnaire (RQ) represent two factors—those of role conflict and role ambiguity—for the sample of middle school counselors?

RQ[3]: Will the mean scores of non-rural and rural counselors differ for each of the seven factors incorporated in the theorized model?

RQ[4]: Will school counselor participants who had a high school climate, low role conflict and role ambiguity, high self-esteem, high social support, and high behavioral problem-solving coping resources indicate lower levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment?

RQ[5]: Do the factors comprising the coping resources construct (self-efficacy, social support, and behavioral problem-solving) moderate the relationship between school environment and burnout factors?

RQ[6]: What is the relationship between school environment and school counselor burnout?

RQ[7]: How well does the theorized structural equation model fit for rural and non-rural licensed school counselors working in North Carolina public middle schools?

Definition of Terms

A number of variables are included in this study and will be operationally defined for the purposes of this study.

Administrator support refers to the degree to which school counselors feel encouraged and helped and/or that a pleasant relationship exists with the administrators and principals within their school, which is measured as part of the researcher-created Climate of School Support Scale (CSSS).

Behavioral problem-solving (or active coping) refers to efforts to actively control a stressor by cognitively analyzing the situation and/or by concrete action in order to solve or overcome the problem (Altemaier, 1995). This coping will be measured by the Behavior Subscale of the Social Problem-Solving Inventory (SPSI; D'Zurrilla & Nezu, 1992).

Census-designated place (CDP) is an area identified by the United States Census Bureau for statistical reporting. CDPs are communities that lack separate municipal government, but which otherwise resemble incorporated places, such as cities or villages (NCES, 2004).

Climate of support refers to the pervasive climate of the school and the level to which school counselors feel encouraged, helped, and/or that a pleasant relationship exists with the administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and general school community. This construct is measured as part of the researcher-created Climate of School Support Scale (CSSS).

Consolidated Statistical Area is synonymous with "metropolitan area," which refers collectively to metropolitan statistical areas, consolidated metropolitan statistical areas, and primary metropolitan statistical areas (NCES, 2004).

Core Based Statistical Area (CBSA) is the United States Census Bureau term for an urban area of at least 10,000 people, based on standards set up by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 2000 and finalized in 2003. These standards are used to replace the definitions of metropolitan areas that were defined in 1990 (NCES, 2004).

Coping style refers to a way of dealing with conditions that are perceived as taxing or exceeding adaptive resources (Folkman, 1982; Monat & Lazarus, 1977). Degree of behavioral (active) coping will be measured by the Behavior Subscale of the Social Problem-Solving Inventory (SPSI; D'Zurrilla & Nezu, 1992).

Counselor burnout refers to a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment among counselors. In this study, burnout will be measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Service Survey (MBI-HSS; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996).

Depersonalization refers to negative and cynical attitudes about, loss of feelings and concern toward, and physical and emotional distancing from one's client (Pines & Maslach, 1978), as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Service Survey (MBI-HSS; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996).

Emotional exhaustion refers to compassion fatigue; feelings of being flat or drained and which may be accompanied by helplessness, hopelessness, and entrapment (Pines & Maslach, 1978), as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Service Survey (MBI-HSS; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996).

Idiosyncratic resources are the school counselor's coping style, level of social support, and self-efficacy.

Individual characteristics refer to counselor demographic variables such as gender, age, ethnicity, licensure attainment, years employed as a school counselor, job assignment, and educational level. Individual characteristics will be reported using a Demographics Questionnaire.

Job satisfaction refers to the degree of contentment an individual feels about his or her occupation or position (Gade & Houdek, 1993).

Job stress is defined as harm or loss, anticipatory threat, or challenge to an individual due to the characteristics of one's occupation or specific position (Kremer & Owen, 1979).

Large city is central city of a consolidated statistical area or core-based statistical area with a population greater than 249,999 (NCES, 2004).

Large town is an incorporated place or Census-designated place with a population greater than 24,999 and located outside a consolidated statistical area or core-based statistical area (NCES, 2004).

Life experiences refer to events in the school counselor's personal life that may affect levels of burnout. Such events include poor physical health, finances, crises, and other negative life events, as measured by the Life Events Questionnaire (LEQ; Brugha & Cragg, 1990).

Mid-size city is a central city of a consolidated statistical area or core-based statistical area with a population of less than 250,000 individuals within its limits (NCES, 2004).

Middle schools serve students from sixth to eighth grade and will be limited to public school districts for the purposes of this study.

Non-rural school refers to schools the designation given by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2004) based on census records. Schools within areas

designated as a large city, mid-sized city, urban fringe, large town, or small town are referred to as non-rural.

Organizational factors refer to specific job descriptions and qualities of the school such as degree and quality of supervision, role conflict, role ambiguity, and role incongruity.

Parent support refers to the degree to which school counselors feel encouraged and helped and/or that a pleasant relationship exists with the parents of the students within their school, which is measured as part of the researcher-created Climate of School Support Scale (CSSS).

Personal accomplishment refers to feelings of competence and success in one's chosen work; those with lower levels of personal accomplishment feel they make less of a contribution and evaluate themselves more negatively (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). This variable will be measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Service Survey (MBI-HSS; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996).

Role ambiguity is the degree to which the school counselor lacks clear knowledge of his or her role and functions within the system (Gray, 1982), as measured by the Role Questionnaire (RQ; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970).

Role conflict results when incompatible demands are placed on the school counselor (Harrison, 1980; Kahn, 1973), as measured by the Role Questionnaire (RQ; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970).

Rural, Inside CSA is any incorporated place, CDP, or territory within a consolidated statistical area or core-based statistical area of a Large or Mid-Size City and defined as rural by the Census Bureau (NCES, 2004).

Rural, Outside CSA is any incorporated place, CDP, or territory not within a consolidated statistical area or core-based statistical area of a Large or Mid-Size City and defined as rural by the Census Bureau (NCES, 2004).

Rural school refers to the designation given by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2004) based on census records. This term is given to schools within areas designated as rural (within or outside a consolidated statistical area).

School climate refers to the school counselor's perception of the pervasive environment created within the school by interactions with administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

School counselor refers to a master's-level counseling professional who has at least two years of experience practicing in a school setting. For the purposes of this study, middle school counselors are the targeted population.

School environment factors are variables of school climate and organizational characteristics that influence the school counselor.

Self-efficacy refers to the individual's general beliefs or judgments regarding capabilities to be successful in activities in the near future, as measured by the General Efficacy Scale of the Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale (GESS; Fibel & Hale, 1978).

Social support refers to support in relationships with significant others such as a spouse or partner, children, extended family, and friends and social groups, as measured by the Multidimensional Support Scale (MSS; Winefield, Winefield, & Tiggerman, 1992).

Small town is an incorporated place or CDP with population between 2,500 and 25,000 and located outside a CSA or CSBA (NCES, 2004).

Staff support refers to the degree to which school counselors feel encouraged and helped and/or that a pleasant relationship exists with the staff members within their school (such as secretaries, custodians, cafeteria workers, etc.), which is measured as part of the researcher-created Climate of School Support Scale (CSSS).

Teacher support refers to the degree to which school counselors feel encouraged and helped and/or that a pleasant relationship exists with teachers within their school, which is measured as part of the researcher-created Climate of School Support Scale (CSSS).

Urban fringe of a large city is any incorporated place, Census Designated Place (CDP), or territory within a CSA or CSBA of a Large City and defined as urban by the Census Bureau (CB; NCES, 2004).

Urban fringe of a mid-size city is any incorporated place, CDP, or territory within a CSA or CSBA of a Mid-Size City and defined as urban by the CB (NCES, 2004).

Overview of Chapters

The organization of this dissertation includes a review of the current literature, the methodology of the study, the results, and discussion of those results. In Chapter II, an

analysis of literature relevant to the proposed model will be presented. The methodology of the study is explained in Chapter III, whereas Chapter IV will provide a comprehensive examination of data analyses and the results of the study. Finally, conclusions, implications, and recommendations will be highlighted in Chapter II.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In conceptualizing a model of school counselor burnout, both environmental and individual factors were considered. Therefore, the literature pertinent to this study involves not only the history of burnout and its empirical study within the helping professions, and school counseling in particular, but also an examination of external factors of the school environment theorized to affect burnout, including school climate, counselor role conflict, and counselor role ambiguity. It is also important to consider the internal characteristics and resources of the school counselor thought to moderate school counselor burnout, such as self-efficacy, social support from family and friends, and behavioral problem solving. Throughout the investigation of the literature, the rationale for the proposed model will be emphasized. Empirical research related to school counselor burnout will be highlighted, and applicable findings from burnout research in the educational and helping fields will be utilized in an effort to provide a more complete synthesis of concepts and implications.

Conceptualizations of School Counselor Impairment

Counselor impairment alters the quality of care practitioners are able to provide (Maslach & Pines, 1979; Sheffield 1999). As Savicki and Cooley (1982) pointed out, theorists described school counselor impairment several different ways prior to 1974, when Freudenberger originated the term *burnout*. Historically, five constructs have

described the negative work-related experiences of school counselors (Morrisette, 2000): school counselor decay, fatigue, stress, critical incident stress, and, most recently, burnout. An explanation of each of these concepts follows.

The term *decay*, first used by Rubner and Zaffrann (1975), describes situations within school counseling and guidance departments when program goals are halted by adverse circumstances. Although this construct focuses on system-wide problems, it is thought that school counselors are affected personally by the organizational factors and should change the status quo with personal action. In contrast, *school counselor fatigue* is theorized to develop cumulatively and subtly within the individual (Vestermark & Johnson, 1970). Indicators of counselor fatigue include an inability to relax, lack of humor, and general sluggishness. Other signals of school counselor fatigue include propensity for distraction, lack of interest in people and their concerns, and impatience. Vestermark and Johnson (1970) attributed counselor fatigue to the inability to establish effective boundaries, which contributes to the counselor's sense of overload.

The third construct of counselor impairment, *school counselor stress*, is defined as the counselor's perception of harm or loss, threat, or challenge as part of his or her activities (Kremer & Owen, 1979). Such stress has been attributed to several factors endemic to the school setting. Stressors are those demands in the school environment that are perceived by the counselor as being problematic. Many sources of stress have been described and supported by researchers. The most commonly mentioned include time overload, role conflict, and role ambiguity (Sears & Navin, 1983), lack of decision-making authority, financial stress, and relationship issues with school staff (Moracco,

Butcke, & McEwen, 1984). It is important to note that the study of stress has its origin beyond its emergence in the school counseling literature. Early researchers considered life events and other external causes of stress. However, Lazurus (1966) theorized that perceptions and individual differences in motivation and cognitive patterns accounted for much of the stress response. This hypothesis was influential and resulted in researchers identifying individual differences that affect the relationship between the environment and one's personal experience of stress (Altemaier, 1995).

Researchers examining school counselor burnout only lately have adopted the study of individual differences. It has been more common for researchers in the counseling profession to examine external variables related to counselor impairment. The fourth construct is a prime example of this tendency. *Critical incident stress* is distinct from general school counselor stress because it stems from a single event or a series of very traumatic events that overwhelm the professional's resources (Figley, 1995). Significant events related to the critical incident stress of helping professionals include death of or injury to children, death of any person, threatening events, knowing the victim, and grotesque sightings and sounds exhibited by victims (Neely & Iburg, 1989; Woolsey, 1986). The children and adolescents with whom school counselors work can be extremely challenging, and, as the embodiment of crisis response, counselors in schools are exposed to a high number of instances in which their ability to cope with stress is tested (Kesler, 1990; Stickel, 1991).

Burnout as a Construct

> When I try to describe my experience to someone else, I use the analogy of a teapot. Just like a teapot, I was on the fire, with water boiling—working hard to handle problems and do good. But after several years, the water had boiled away, and yet I was still on the fire—a burned out teapot in danger of cracking.
>
> –Carol. B. (Maslach, 1982, p. 2)

Maslach (1982) defined the burnout syndrome as "emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do 'people work' of some kind" (p. 3). This definition is the most commonly used by burnout experts, and it has been the most broadly researched. Maslach and colleagues conducted the most systematic empirical research on burnout, the foundation for a massive body of research in different occupations across many countries. Maslach's theory is the only one that has been applied to school counselor burnout.

The three phases of burnout are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1979). *Emotional exhaustion* has been identified as the most salient reaction to the stress of job demands and lack of accomplishment at work. Stressful events combined with high, unfulfilled expectations for self-fulfillment produce a sense of overload that leads the individual to feel that the job is excessively burdensome. As disappointment and frustration mount, emotional exhaustion sets in. Like Carol, the person feels drained and used up, with insufficient energy to make it through the next day. Once emotional exhaustion sets in, the professional feels unable to give aspects of the self to others (Maslach, 1982) and may cut

back involvement with others by remaining emotionally uninvolved. *Depersonalization* is characterized by cynicism about the job that leads to detachment. When people feel cynical, they assume a cold, distant, depersonalized attitude toward their work and the people they encounter. They tend to minimize their involvement and may let go of previously held ideals. Negativity about others may progress to acknowledgment of inner failure. Feelings of ineffectiveness are accompanied by a growing sense of inadequacy, in which it may be perceived that many factors have conspired against the individual's efforts to progress. Eventually, sense of *personal accomplishment* on the job may suffer. A severely burnt out school counselor feels ineffective and overlooked in the system and loses confidence in the ability to make a difference professionally and in the lives of students. An individual may then resort to a combination of functional and dysfunctional reactions or coping strategies. "With the crumbling of self-esteem, depression may set in, and some will seek counseling or therapy for what they believe are personal problems, [whereas] others will change their jobs, often to abandon any kind of work that brings them into stressful contact with people" (Maslach, 1982, p. 5). It is clear that burnout enacts a significant cost in terms of lost work, ineffective practices, mismanagement of tasks, and increasingly painful personal experiences (Ross & Altemaier, 1994).

Environmental Contributions to Burnout

In her three-factor conceptualization of the burnout syndrome, Maslach (1982) focused on external factors more than individual factors, although she noted that variations in level of burnout may be related to individual personality. Environmental

contributions to burnout involve the qualities of the work setting that affect the helping professional's interaction with clients and coworkers. These qualities include organizational factors (such as role functions) as well as interactional factors (such as school climate). The bulk of the empirical burnout literature about school counselors addresses the influence of environmental factors of the school, such as leadership style (Cummings & Nall, 1982), occupational stress (Moracco, Butche, & McEwen, 1984; Sears & Navin, 1983), role conflict and ambiguity (Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Hutchinson, Barrick, & Grove, 1986; Kim, 1993; Mercer, 1981), large caseloads, lack of clinical supervision (Davis, 1984; Feldstein, 2000), job satisfaction (Anderson, 1985; Stickel, 1991), lack of rewards, excessive bureaucracy, lack of social support (Burisch, 1989), absenteeism and propensity to leave the job (Anderson, 1985), and issues of counselor autonomy (Heckman, 1980). However, several aspects of the school environment have been found empirically to have a statistically significant impact on school counselor burnout: stress and job satisfaction, role conflict, role ambiguity, school climate, population issues, and supervision. Each of these aspects will be considered individually below in the following sections.

Burnout, Job Satisfaction, and Stress

Mercer (1981) proposed that when a discrepancy exists between a counselor's job expectations and actual role, the result is stress. In his review of the historical role of school counselors, Mercer stated that principals tend to use counselors as administrative tools because of a belief that what happens behind in their office behind closed doors is not as useful. Counseling effectiveness and successful outcomes are not always readily

visible, and confidentiality impinges communication of student growth. Mercer theorized that some counselors may increase visibility within the school by taking on additional roles, thus increasing role confusion (i.e., role ambiguity, role conflict, and task overload).

During two guidance conventions in Ohio, Sears and Navin (1983) sampled 240 school counselors to investigate the source and prevalence of stress. The researchers collected demographic data and asked counselors to rate 40 school counseling situations on a 5-point Likert-type scale in which 1 indicated the situation was not at all stressful and 5 indicated the situation was extremely stressful. The same scale was utilized for the sole measure of stress, in which respondents were asked, "In general, how stressful do you find being a counselor?" Fourteen percent of the school counselor respondents found school counseling to be "very stressful," and 50% of those sampled described their job as "moderately stressful," with the highest ranked stressors being: (1) quantitative overload (too much work to be accomplished reasonably), (2) role conflict, and (3) role ambiguity. No relationship was found to exist between counselor demographics and stress level. Sears and Navin (1983) concluded that personality characteristics rather than biographic characteristics may be more important determinants of counselor stress. Unfortunately, no validity and reliability information was given for the measure of stress. Additionally, the school counselors sampled may not be representative of all counselors in the state (as they voluntarily attended a conference), and thus the findings are limited in generalizability to school counselors in other states. However, the relationship between school counselor roles and stress was established with this study.

The next year, Moracco, Butche, and McEwen (1984) examined sources of stress for 361 members of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), utilizing the Counselor Occupational Stress Inventory (COSI). This instrument utilized 50 Likert-type items in which respondents were asked to rate the degree of stress present in certain school counseling situations from one to four (1 = not stressful, and 4 = extremely stressful). Cronbach's alpha reliability for the instrument ranged from .81 to .95.

Through factor analysis of the data, six factors were found to influence occupational stress for school counselors: lack of decision-making authority, financial security, nonprofessional duties, professional job overload, counselor-teacher relationship, and counselor-principal relationship. Eighty percent of the counselors reported that if they were able to go back in time, they would still choose to be a school counselor. Significantly, school counselors were almost two times more likely than teachers to say they would choose their profession again if they had the chance. However, school counselors reported their most common stressors were time devoted to non-professional tasks, the need to make decisions without adequate planning, and the tasks performed in a time-limited fashion. Interestingly, counselors working in schools with higher enrollment and younger counselors were found to be more susceptible to the influence of the six factors and to have higher levels of stress.

Replication of the Moracco, Butche, and McEwen (1984) study would be exceedingly difficult, as procedures were not documented. Additionally, the study was significantly limited because the school counselors sampled were members of ASCA and were therefore not representative of all school counselors. Demographic information for

the sample was not given. Despite the problems, Moracco, Butche, and McEwen (1984) were the first in the school counseling literature to address the multiple components of school counselor stress, including relationship, school structure, and counselor role variables. These researchers also contributed the first evidence that counselor and school variables (age and enrollment) may influence school counselor stress.

Anderson (1985) focused on the job satisfaction, levels of stress, burnout, and absenteeism of 77 female public school counselors in two suburban school districts. The researcher utilized the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), the Institute for Personality and Ability Testing Anxiety Scale (IPAT), and the Job Descriptive Index (JDI). All three measures have strong psychometric support. The IPAT is a 40-item questionnaire that measures an individual's anxiety in five factors: emotional instability, suspiciousness, proneness for guilt, low integration, and tension. Validity of the instrument has been supported, and internal reliability for the IPAT was reported to range from .78 to .92. The JCI has been supported as highly reliable and valid in measuring five factors comprising job satisfaction (Balzer et al., 1997).

Anderson (1985) found that the total MBI score and the MBI subscales of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion were significantly related to stress, job dissatisfaction, and absenteeism. However, personal accomplishment was not related to these variables. Anderson (1985) found that role conflict and ambiguity (as measured by the JDI) were strongly related to school counselor stress, burnout, and absenteeism. Anderson further speculated that absenteeism may be a coping mechanism utilized by burned out counselors. In this study, no significant relationships were found to exist

between burnout and salary, promotion, and supervision. Although the findings were limited in generalizability because the participants were females from a specific (small) geographic location, Anderson made significant links between occupational variables and school counselor burnout.

Stickel (1991) followed up on those links by investigating the job satisfaction and burnout of 147 school counselors in three rural states. This time, the demographic variables of the participants (including age, gender, years of experience, average number of students, education, and school level) were recorded on the MBI Demographic Data Sheet. The researcher additionally utilized the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, Short Form (MSQ). Cronbach alpha reliability for the MBI was found to be .90 for emotional exhaustion, .76 for depersonalization, and .76 for personal accomplishment. The MSQ short form has been supported as valid through convergent and discriminant validity. The instrument consists of 20 questions measuring general occupational satisfaction, for which the reliability coefficient was found to be .90.

Compared to appropriate norm groups such as school psychologists, the school counselors in Stickel's (1991) study exhibited lower levels of job satisfaction. Although their personal accomplishment was high, the counselors reported moderate levels of exhaustion and depersonalization. Thus, the findings indicated that job dissatisfaction and burnout are related constructs. Interestingly, as the school counselor's caseload of students increased, the counselor's level of emotional exhaustion also increased. However, the respondents were rural counselors, and Stickel noted there may be unique factors of this context that lowers the generalizability to all school counselors. This study

offered more support for the idea that demographic variables of the counselors and the student population make a difference in job satisfaction and burnout.

School Counselor Role

As the previously reviewed studies illustrate, the school counselor's role has been the focus of a considerable number of studies over the past 20 years, and the influence of the environment has consistently been a focus of discussion (Boyd & Walter, 1975; Brown & Brown, 1975; Mayer et al., 1983). Early on, it was believed that organizational and administrative influences led to a compromise of counseling objectives that redefined the counselor's role (Kim, 1993). School counselors are often required to perform multiple managerial and clerical tasks (Hutchinson, Barrick, & Grove, 1986; Kim, 1993) that give them less time to be involved with counseling and therapeutic work (Burnham & Jackson, 2000). Role overload can result (Stickel, 1991). Just as Sears and Navin (1983) found that 65% of counselors reported school counseling to be moderately or very stressful because of stress related to role conflict and role ambiguity, considerable evidence exists that school counselors, in trying to meet all of the demands placed on them, may become so stressed that it affects the quality of their work and even their mental health (Kim, 1993; Lambie, 2002; Olsen & Dilley, 1988).

Hutchinson, Barrick, and Grove (1986) examined role congruence by sampling 56 secondary school counselors in two diverse counties in Indiana that represented rural, urban, and inner-city populations. Participants were asked to rank 16 activities twice—first the ideal activities of the school counselor, and then the actual activities the school counselor performed on a daily basis. In this study, most school counselors reported that

they commonly performed many of their ideal activities. However, school counselors said they would like to spend more time in guidance activities, group counseling, and career and college planning, whereas this time was currently filled by clerical duties consisting of test coordination, record-keeping, scheduling, and other non-counseling duties.

Unfortunately, validity and reliability for the researcher-created instrument was not provided. The list of tasks provided by the researcher (individual personal, academic, and group counseling; career planning; parent and teacher or administrator consultation; classroom guidance; management of special education and gifted-and-talented programs; public relations; and non-counseling duties such as record-keeping, attendance, etc.) may have been limited, in that there may have been other duties the school counselors performed that counselors were unable to report (i.e., disciplinary tasks, bus or lunch duty, and sponsorship of school clubs, etc.). Although the study is limited in generalizability because it provides information about a small number of counselors in one state, the findings do add to the description of school counselor tasks that differ from ideal counselor roles and thus point to incongruence that may increase counselor stress.

In a dissertation study, Kim (1993) examined the relationship between counselor burnout and role congruence in a study sampling 69 counselors, 66 principals, and 45 school psychologists in Kansas high schools and 30 counselor educators in six Kansas universities. Kim administered the Role Questionnaire (a measure of role congruence in which low levels of role ambiguity and conflict indicate high role congruence) and a High School Counselor Questionnaire (estimating the time counselors spend performing

nine school counseling duties) to all groups, and the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) to counselors.

Although the overall role congruence for high school counselors in Kansas was reported as above average, significant positive relationships were found to exist between role congruence and burnout. When counselors perceived their role to be congruent, burnout levels were low; when they reported that their role was incongruent, they were likely to have higher levels of burnout. This study provided the first real empirical evidence of this relationship, even though its generalizability was limited. An additional limitation is that the tasks listed in the High School Counselor Questionnaire were restricted in scope (i.e., many duties may have been left out). Additionally, alternative contributors to school counselor burnout such as family life stressors and individual variables were not examined. However, Kim (1993) provided compelling evidence that burnout and counselor role were related in a statistically significant manner.

Burnham and Jackson (2000) extended Kim's findings by comparing the actual role of 80 licensed K-12 school counselors from two southeastern states to two accepted counseling models in an effort to examine counselor role congruence within schools. To document the multiple roles of school counselors, the convenience sample was interviewed based on a 19-item instrument focusing on time spent on duties such as individual and group counseling, guidance, consultation, conferencing, testing, career planning, public relations work, and administrative tasks.

After verbatim responses were blind-coded, the researchers concluded that whereas the school counselors were performing accepted functions of the school

counselor based on the models, there were many differences and gaps in their duties. Specifically, various time-consuming clerical tasks were reported as interfering with other roles. The incongruence of paperwork and other non-counseling duties were reported to cause stress that may contribute to burnout.

Although the results of this study are comparable to other studies, there were many limitations. The sample was not randomized, nor was demographic information about the participants provided. The relatively unsophisticated analyses were unable to take into account the factor of time spent in each role, which would have provided a quantitative manifestation of role incongruence. Overall, however, the data adds to the literature documenting school counselors' perceptions of an inconsistent role and the need for further definition of their duties.

Role Conflict

Corey (1986) noted that all counselors face the central issue of specific definition of role. School counselors, in particular, confront a wide variety of expectations from their various constituencies. *Role conflict* is defined as incongruity of expectations associated with a role (Van Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981), and is said to exist when persons simultaneously fulfill multiple roles that may or may not mesh. It is the "extent to which a person experiences pressures within one role that are incompatible with the pressures that arise within another role" (Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Connolly, 1983, p. 201). Role conflict is thought to emerge with scarcity of organizational resources (Haas, 1964) and a high diversity of role senders, those who help to define the individuals' professional duties (Hall & Gordon, 1973). Role conflict occurs for school counselors

when incompatible demands or expectations are placed upon them, such as when they work with principals or teachers who have different expectations and needs, have to work on inconsequential tasks, and cannot address students' problems in their own way.

When counselors cannot contribute to the decisions that affect their professional lives, they may feel that they do not have control. It is not uncommon today for school counselors to view their professional activities as inappropriate and incongruent with their training, professional expertise, and desires (Acker, 1999). School climates may interfere with counselors' professional autonomy due to minimal opportunity for decision-making and self-evaluation (Lambie, 2002). Certainly, various groups view the counselor's role differently. Principals utilizing counselors as administrative tools rather than accepting them as mental health professionals is a longstanding problem encountered by school counselors (Gladding, 2000). Teachers and parents have their own ideas about proper school counselor role as well (Clark, 1995). In fact, even school counselors have been found to differ in perceptions of their roles (Kim, 1993).

Stickel (1991) reported that non-counseling duties and substitute teaching may be significant predictors of role dissatisfaction and burnout. In the literature addressing how individuals resolve role conflict (Kahn et al., 1964; Jones, 1993), a four-step process is described in which one: (1) conforms to role A, (2) conforms to role B, (3) conforms partially to both, or (4) conforms to neither. Van de Vliert (1981) suggested that as individuals attempt to resolve role conflict, they mull over each of the roles, and in most cases a clear choice emerges. However, if that does not happen, the individual must

resolve the conflict by changing A or B in some way. Only if this second step fails do individuals resort to compromise and finally to avoidance.

Seiber (1974) suggested that adapting to role conflict could result in positive outcomes by requiring tolerance, exposure to new information, flexibility, and a decrease of boredom. Marks (1977) pointed out that multiple and conflicting roles can be energy-creating rather than energy-draining. However, most studies have shown a positive correlation between role conflict and impairment outcomes among many occupational groups (Kim, 1993). Role conflict has been found to decrease personal well-being and job satisfaction, while significantly increasing psychophysical symptoms, especially in women (Beehr, Walsh, & Taber, 1976). Other outcomes described include job-related tension and fatigue (Beehr, Walsh, & Taber, 1976), lower commitment, lower performance evaluations (Haas, 1964), and increased propensity to leave a job (Acker, 1999).

Role Ambiguity

There appears to be a general consensus among researchers that role ambiguity contributes to various aspects of stress and job dissatisfaction (Acker, 2003; Burham & Jackson, 2000; Kim, 1993). *Role ambiguity* has been defined as the degree to which clear information is lacking regarding the expectations associated with a role, methods for fulfilling known role expectations, and/or the consequences of role performance (Van Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981). School counselor role ambiguity results from lack of clear, planned goals and objectives for the job, uncertainty about responsibilities, and/or from questioning how interventions impact the lives of students (Um & Harrison, 1998).

Work roles are likely to be ambiguous when administrators wish to centralize power or when no consensus is possible about what should be done to obtain certain goals. In both cases, the school counselor invests effort without any guarantee of the best possible outcome. Thus, ambiguous work situations frustrate the counselor's goal-directed efforts. Role ambiguity is positively correlated with lower self-esteem (Brief & Aldag, 1976) and low degrees of participation in job-related decisions (Tosi & Tosi, 1970), and is positively associated with propensity to leave a job.

Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity

Kahn (1978) suggested that burnout of educators may be related to role conflict and ambiguity, a hypothesis confirmed for special education teachers (Ysseldyke & Algozzine, 1982), general education teachers (Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982), and counselors and school psychologists (Pierson & Archambault, 1984). These results were confirmed by Pierson-Huney and Archamabult (1987), who found that when counselors in Connecticut public schools were compared to teachers, school social workers, school psychologists, and reading specialists, the group of school counselors reported the highest level of role conflict and the second highest level of role ambiguity, as well as the second highest level of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization as measured by the Maslach Burnout Indicator (MBI; Maslach & Jackson, 1996). Adding to the empirical data, Kim (1993) found significant relationships between the amount of role conflict, role ambiguity, and burnout in her study of high school counselors working in Kansas public schools.

Most recently, Acker (2003) sought to identify how higher levels of burnout are related to the perceptions of autonomy and role congruence of 259 health service providers working in 15 outpatient mental health settings in New York. Examination of the relationships indicated that both role conflict and role ambiguity had statistically significant positive correlations with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Role ambiguity had a statistically significantly negative correlation with feelings of personal accomplishment. Role conflict and role ambiguity both were negatively correlated with social support from supervisors and coworkers. Additionally, social support was negatively related to emotional exhaustion and positively related to feelings of personal accomplishment.

Thus, role ambiguity and conflicts have been shown to exist in school counseling (Parker, 1980; Pierson-Huney & Archambault, 1987; Pierson-Huney & Archambault, 1984), have been reported as significant sources of stress for counselors (Moracco, Butche, & McEwen, 1984), and can lead to an increased susceptibility to counselor burnout (Cherniss, 1980; Farber, 1984; Maslach & Pines, 1977; Moracco, Butche, & McEwens, 1984; Sears & Navin, 1983). Role conflict and role ambiguity have been highly correlated with each other, but the impact of each is different (Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler, 1984). Together, the two constructs have been positively correlated with tension and anxiety (Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler, 1984), fatigue (Beehr, Walsh, & Taber, 1976), powerlessness and distrust (Kottkamp & Mansfield, 1985), negative attitudes toward role senders (Van Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981), lack of loyalty (Greene, 1972), high turnover of personnel (Beehr, Walsh, & Taber, 1976; Johnson & Green, 1973), high absenteeism

(Van Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981), low productivity (Van Sell, Brief, & Schuler, 1981), low job effectiveness (Miles & Perrault, 1976), and lower performance evaluations (Haas, 1964).

School Climate

Institutionally employed counselors in schools and hospitals tend to exhibit more burnout than do private practitioners or group practitioners (Acker, 2003; Heckman, 1980). Their burnout appears to be related to interactions with people and their needs, and lack of power, isolation from colleagues, lack of common purpose or philosophy, and a lack of support among employees are recurring themes. This is found particularly in the literature on work conditions within public schools (Feldman, 1985; Friedman, 1991). Unfriendly practices and protocol are consistently viewed as a source of stress and burnout among teachers and other members of the school system (Pierce & Molloy, 1990). In many cases, the educational workplace is slow-changing and bureaucratic, and seldom fosters peer dialogue and group development (Beehr, 1981). Although some schools have open climates characterized by frequent and vital interactions between equal professionals, most schools are better described as closed, with little professional dialogue between administration and staff (Sutton, 1988).

Empirical investigations support the idea that relationships with coworkers are an important source of job dissatisfaction. Beehr (1981) hypothesized that many employees are dissatisfied at work because colleagues develop off-putting expectations, and he found that individuals who become stressed out blame their coworkers for it. His study is one of many in a growing mass of research in which interaction with others (clients,

colleagues, administrators) is a main component in the emergence of strain and burnout. According to Feldman (1988), the *work climate* of an organization is an essential aspect of the work culture. It is often described via dimensions like autonomy, latitude, structure, reward system, warmth, and support, and is the result of the typical institutional customs, practices, and procedures.

Researchers have indicated that it is the complex, intense interpersonal interactions required by some jobs that trigger the burnout experience, and the climate is the outcome of these interactions. Significant relationships between the empathy expressed within the workplace climate and the burnout of the employees have been reported in several studies (Miller, Birkholt, Scott, & Stage, 1995; Miller, Stiff, & Ellis, 1988). The emotional climate of the workplace, especially the support of one's colleagues and administrators, was identified by Parry (1989) as the coping strategy that offers the best promise against burnout in child welfare workers. Zellars and Perrewé (2001) found a significant association between the number of positive conversations in which colleagues engage and reduced levels of all three dimensions of burnout. Additionally, conversations reflecting empathy for a coworker's thoughts and feelings were associated with increased personal accomplishment, whereas conversations with a negative content were associated with increased levels of all three dimensions of burnout.

These results corroborate the work of Pines and Maslach (1978), who found that better relationships among staff members were associated with greater perceptions of job satisfaction, willingness to express oneself, generally healthy behaviors, and feelings of

success. On the other hand, a poor relationship with superiors is an important underlying and perhaps causal factor in the development of stress-related problems.

An environment with few opportunities for support may make it difficult for a counselor to maintain a strong sense of effectiveness (Mayer, Butterworth, Komoto, & Benoit, 1983). Within the empirical research on school counseling, the level of occupational support has the greatest effect or influence on levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Lambie, 2002). Thus, the climate of support in the school is a very important factor to consider in the development of burnout. Indeed, a supportive occupational climate may be the most effective form of prevention for burnout for school counselors (Lambie, 2002), as it may impact other aspects that affect burnout. For example, Mayer et al. (1983) found a positive relationship between the climate of support—especially support expressed by the building principal—and a counselor's autonomy to change the role of school counselor.

As early as 1982, Cummings and Nall sampled 31 school counselors practicing in 23 rural and urban Eastern Iowa school districts to study the relationship between school counselor burnout and administrator leadership style. The researchers categorized perceptions of administrator leadership style by utilizing the School Leadership Inventory, a 20-item multiple-choice inventory that identifies leadership ranging from authoritarian to participatory styles. School counselors were asked to rate their degree of burnout on a 9-point, Likert-type scale, with 1 meaning "functioning at the peak of your capacity" and 9 meaning "severely burned out."

After using product-moment correlations to analyze the relationships between leadership style and burnout, the researchers found that school counselors who perceived their administrators to be more authoritarian in leadership style reported higher levels of burnout compared to school counselors who reported they were commonly asked to participate in decision-making. Unfortunately, the small sample size limits generalizability, as does the single-item measurement of burnout. The data may be less valid and reliable, especially as the researchers did not present any information related to these issues. It would have been helpful if perceptions of school counselors within the same school had been compared, as it is possible levels of burnout influence perceptions of school leadership style. The results must be interpreted with caution, but they provided preliminary support for the idea that school climate may influence school counselor burnout.

The importance of a positive school climate becomes especially clear when school counselors find themselves in work situations that do not foster expected, basic support systems (Sutton & Fall, 1995). For example, in rural areas it is not uncommon for one counselor to provide services for the entire school or district, thus working in multiple schools and with multiple-aged students (Sutton, 1988). In other schools, there may be almost no recognition of the counselor role (Carlson, 1989), with professional development programs solely for teacher-related issues (Sutton & South-Worth, 1984). Clinical supervision may be especially rare in some districts (Barret & Schmidt, 1986; Ponzo, 1989), and thus there may exist little opportunity for interactions with school counselor colleagues. Isolation especially is common in rural areas.

Burnout and Population Factors

In his review of the literature on rural schools, Saba (1991) provided seven typical themes common to this school counseling situation: the experience of isolation, the pervasive idea that time is money, a high degree of visibility, persistent lack of specialists, frequent personal interaction, importance of attaining the skills of a generalist, and awareness of and attendance to local culture. There are several different types of rural areas due to variables such as socioeconomic status, density of the population, and economic viability of the surrounding area (Helge, 1984; Lee, 1984). As such, rural school counselors need to become adept at utilizing many counselor techniques and well-versed in diverse topics, have strong interpersonal relations skills, attain knowledge of the rural sociology and way of behaving, exhibit community agency skills, become an advocate for self and students, and learn to consult and coordinate with others (Saba, 1991).

It is difficult to generalize about the working conditions experienced by rural counselors because although the need to learn more about rural education issues and effective delivery systems has been demonstrated (Sutton & Southworth, 1990), little attention has been paid to any systematic investigation of the concerns in the field of school counseling. Rural schools are as diverse as the students they serve. Generally, it is believed that counselors in small schools can develop personal understandings of students and their families, and more flexibility is afforded. The organization of rural schools has been characterized as nonbureaucratic, with low centralralized control and

thus increased autonomy of school counselors, which emphasizes quality rather than quantity of service (McIntire, Marion, & Quaglia, 1990).

Problems of this context are related to poverty: a small tax base with a higher percentage going to education, relocation of young adults, higher costs of services related to transportation, and the scarcity of professional resources (Helge, 1983). Additionally, the isolation of rural areas offers fewer cultural attractions, less social activity, fewer professional development activities, and heavier workloads, all of which contribute to the difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified staff members (Blasi, 1981). Rural schools generally have fewer services, less specialized equipment, and lower levels of funding than their larger counterparts (Nachtigal, 1982). Educators in rural areas tend to be more susceptible to community pressures, as they are usually well known by all and are regularly observed personally as well as professionally (Nachtigal, 1982). Although teachers have been reported to be happier in small schools, staff turnover is proportionally higher (Scott, 1963). Rural school counselors are often the only trained counselors in their schools and even in their districts (McIntire, Marion, & Quaglia, 1990).

Matthes (1987) noted some interesting geographic contextual differences among counselors regarding age, experience, and gender. Rural counselors were reported to be an average of almost four years younger than their suburban peers and almost seven years younger than their urban colleagues. This age difference translated into expected differences in professional experience. The sex differences were striking: a disproportionately high number of women (85%) were working as counselors in rural

settings and a disproportionately low number (12.5%) were working in urban districts. Counselors in rural schools were the least likely to receive help from others in the resolution of their concerns. Therefore, they were likely to become more self-sufficient.

These findings were extended by Sutton (1988) and Sutton and Southworth (1990), who sampled 194 male and 153 female counselors in Maine public schools and compared the responses related to work environment for those in isolated and non-isolated school situations. All participants in the study were counselors in public K-12 school systems. Rural districts were more than 15 miles from an urban district and had a student population less than 1,200. Non-rural districts comprised urban and suburban areas. The researcher-created survey consisted of 15 questions eliciting demographic information; 40 items designed to assess school counselor support, relationships, role, pressure, referral sources, and professional development; and a 16-item semantic differential designed to assess attitudes related to the school counselor's role. The return rate for the study was 84%.

In the first of three phases, Sutton and Southworth (1990) conducted two factor analyses to reduce the data. The first factor analysis considered the responses to a series of questions related to relationships and work. A five-factor solution was identified as most appropriate and resulted in the following categories: Administrative-Guidance Relationships, Guidance Value, Pressure, Referral, and Personal Support. A second factor analysis was performed on the 16-item semantic differential, and a three-factor solution was revealed (Professional Identity, Stress, and Role). In the second phase of the analysis, ratings obtained from a series of questions on the frequency of requested

support were combined, resulting in a single score, and that category was titled Requested Support. Ratings on a series of questions related to professional development were combined, resulting in a single score called Professional Development. Finally, a 2 x 2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of each of the ten identified factors examined the relationship between rural and non-rural counselors. Preliminary analyses indicated that participants' sex affected the results.

Isolated counselors reported having problems finding adequate resources, and females viewed available referral services less positively than did males. The results of the study suggested that some counselors may tolerate isolated settings better than others, and that female counselors feel more comfortable than males in isolated settings. Being alone can provide the counselor with a greater sense of control in developing and directing the guidance program, can increase the positive identity associated with being unique in the school, and there is a greater likelihood of being more highly valued by the professional staff and community members (Sutton & Southworth, 1990).

Sutton (1988) speculated that females seek support from others, which seems to lessen the pressure they feel as school counselors. This propensity facilitates attainment of personal and professional goals. Additionally, the researcher concluded that having no other colleagues available forced them to more readily associate with other staff members and increased their opportunities for promoting themselves and their guidance programs. Isolated counselors could seek support from either outside professionals or teachers and administrators. Sutton and Southworth (1990) found that their principal or some other administrator supervised 90% of the counselors. Counselors in rural school districts

perceived their relationships with administrators in a significantly more positive manner than did counselors in a non-rural setting. Due to isolation, counselors and administrators are often separated from colleagues in their own disciplines and may seek each other out for communication and idea exchanges. "They seem to rely on each other, consult more often, spend more time together, and provide greater support for each other" (Sutton & Southworth, 1990).

There were no differences between rural and non-rural counselors in the value placed on guidance by other staff members and community members and on the factor of perceived pressure, whereas rural counselors perceived themselves to be under greater stress because they reported being more excited, tense, and overworked than did non-rural counselors. Women perceived their professional identity as school counselors in a significantly more positive way than did their male counterparts.

Stress, role perceptions, and requests for professional support by rural and non-rural counselors seemed to be interrelated. Even though they perceived their roles more positively and reported seeking more support than non-rural counselors, rural counselors perceived themselves as having more stress. Because of having fewer referral sources, they must rely more often on their own resources and complain of being overworked, having more responsibilities, and never being able to finish everything. Sutton and Southworth (1990) found that rural counselors are less likely to have job descriptions and to be the "jack of all trades" within the school, with no opportunity to specialize and to pass tasks to others or exchange ideas with colleagues. Limitations of the study were that the sample is generalizable only to one state's school counselors. Reliability and

validity data were not presented for the researcher-created instrumentation. Nevertheless, Sutton's (1988) study established there are occupational differences between counselors who are isolated and those who are not.

Additionally, Gade and Houdek (1993) compared the job satisfaction and functions of 47 school counselors serving in split school assignments with those of 59 counselors serving in single school units in North Dakota public schools. The researchers developed a 5-point, Likert-type instrument to measure the amount of time involved in 17 various guidance activities (1 = 1 hour or less and 5 = over 15 hours a week). The 17 items were also rated for job satisfaction, with 1 = very low and 5 = very high satisfaction. The Hoppock Job Satisfaction Blank (JSB) was utilized to measure general job satisfaction. The JSB is reported to be a valid and reliable measure. This instrument has four subscales, uses a 7-point scale, and has a total score which can range from 4 to 28.

Gade and Houdek (1993) found that counselors serving two or more schools showed significantly greater time involvement in classroom guidance, in counseling with parents, and in research and evaluation activities. This population was less satisfied with leadership activities, liked the job less, and was less satisfied in general with their job. Less than half (46.8%) of these counselors reported enthusiasm in liking their job while over three-fourths (76.3%) of the counselors serving a single school were enthusiastic about their counseling job. The results of this study showed that splitting counselor assignments can be relatively more time-consuming and less satisfying. These

counselors set priorites of classroom guidance activities, prevention, and counseling parents.

Gade and Houdek (1993) concluded that lower general job satisfaction suggests these counselors may suffer from role overload with too many demands for the available energy. Limitations of this study include the lack of reliability and validity data for the researcher-created instrument, lack of demographic information, and lack of generalizability because the study was confined to one state. However, the study added to the mounting literature supporting the notion that context greatly affects school counselor perceptions.

Burnout and Supervision

The lack of clinical supervision provided to school counselors has been a subject of concern to counselor educators and school counselors for many decades (Crutchfield & Borders, 1997). Supervision and its possible impact on school counselor burnout were first examined by Davis (1984) when he sampled 120 members of the Oregon Personnel and Guidance Association. Of the counselor participants, 37 were school counselors. Davis developed the Counselor Supervision Inventory (CSI) for the study and also utilized the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The CSI measures supervisory behavior comprising three 20-item subscales: counseling (reported to have a reliability coefficient of .82), consultation (.82), and teaching (.82). Analyses revealed that counselors were dissatisfied with the supervision they received and that there was a significant positive correlation to the level and frequency of burnout and supervision. As dissatisfaction with

supervision increased, so too did emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Personal accomplishment increased as dissatisfaction with supervision decreased.

Thus, Davis (1984) concluded that adequate clinical supervision may be an effective deterrent to counselor burnout. Unfortunately, data for the sample of school counselors was not uniquely identified, so we don't know how accurate the findings are for this group in particular. Generalizability was further constrained because these school counselors were members of a professional organization in one state. Further, we cannot be sure that the burnout reported in this study was not due to other internal or organizational factors.

In 2000, Feldstein examined burnout in 217 Allegheny County school counselors who did and did not receive clinical supervision. Participants took the School Counselor Supervision Inventory Questionnaire (SCSQ) and the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators' Survey (MBI-ES). The SCSQ was adapted from a questionnaire described by Roberts and Borders (1994) and required demographic questions for the participant and situation (school counseling assignment and the supervisor title, frequency, and position). It defined the three categories of supervision (administrative, program, and counseling) and required respondents to describe their supervision experiences for each category. Utilizing multiple regression and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Feldstein (2000) found that the frequency and quality of clinical supervision are significantly negatively correlated to emotional exhaustion reported by school counselors. As with other studies, these burnout rates were limited because they may indicate other internal or organization

variables. Further, the generalizability was limited because the sampling was done in one county.

Individual Contributors to Burnout

Much of the burnout literature seems to suggest that adverse organizational conditions within school counseling are more significant in the etiology of burnout than are personality factors (Gerstein, Topp, & Correll, 1987; Pines & Aronson, 1988). This may well be because few researchers have chosen to investigate how internal factors of the individual are associated with burnout. Whereas variables such as hardiness (Maddi & Kobasa, 1984), a sense of coherence (Antonovsky, 1987), and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) have been identified and investigated by burnout researchers, few counseling researchers have explored these factors.

In the entire the school counseling literature, only two studies were located that examined the relationship of individual factors to burnout, and these two were somewhat inconclusive. However, individual contributions to burnout have been recognized and researched in the related educational and helping fields. Individual factors that have been confirmed to have a significant correlation with burnout tend to be related more closely to coping ability than to personality traits. Factors with the greatest empirical support include self-efficacy, social support from family and friends, and behavioral problem solving. Demographic factors and are another aspect of individual contributions that will be addressed.

Personality and Demographic Factors

Although it is widely suggested that individual personality differences may exert some sort of influence on burnout (Gann, 1979; Lambie, 2002; Savicki & Cooley, 1982; Sheffield, 1999), the evidence is preliminary. The few researchers who have investigated personality factors (Brookings, Bolton, Brown, & McEvoy, 1985; Johnson & Stone, 1986) have examined single personality traits. The reason for the weak or inconsistent findings may have been the constricted and somewhat random selection of personality traits (Zellars & Perrewé, 2001).

Studies failing to use a comprehensive model of personality have been criticized as being unconvincing because the most relevant traits to burnout may have been overlooked (McCrae & John, 1992). For example, Heckman (1980) found therapists with higher levels of burnout as less optimistic, less confident, less able to cope with stress, less ambitious, less expressive, and less of a risk-taker. Other studies have explored naïveté, idealism, unrealistic aspirations, training deficits, and external locus of control (Burisch, 1989). There appears to be little empirical support for the trait choice, and results for the various personality traits have been less than robust and unconnected to other findings. Of the two studies on burnout and personality that were published within the school counseling field, one was qualititative and related to amorphous personality factors (Sheffield, 1999), and the other concerned ego (Lambie, 2002).

Sheffield (1999) proposed that personality characteristics that can lead to burnout involve counselor's need systems, unrealistic expectations that are unchallenged, and personal philosophy. Sheffield conducted a qualitative study of the burnout of three

diverse counselors within a school, paying particular attention to how personality factors may impact burnout. Each participant was interviewed twice in two weeks, and the tapes were transcribed and coded by a third party. The negative emotions characterized by burnout (frustration, apathy, inferiority, anger, fear, overwhelmed, lack of control and accomplishment) were experienced by all three participants. Themes that emerged included burnout attitudes in which the school counselors considered changing professions or schools; unmet needs such being appreciated or valued; perceptions of their need to help and nurturance of students. Burnout causes were found to be task overload, inadequate time to perform tasks, and unrealistic expectations. Burnout behaviors included ignoring specific job duties, lack of exercise, changeability in food consumption, insomnia, and crying.

Sheffield (1999) concluded that the counselor's needs systems, expectations, and personal responses can lead to burnout, and that personality and external factors are important in the development and maintenance of school counselor burnout. Quantitative methods were not utilized in this study, and there was a very small number of participants. The themes that emerged were generalizable only to these three school counselors in one location and school system. With only one coder, there is no possibility of judging the reliability of the themes. Thus, study may have been susceptible to bias because of the interview situation and procedures.

The second study devoted to exploring personality factors associated with school counselor burnout was conducted by Lambie (2002). He examined the contribution of ego developmental level to burnout of 225 randomly sampled American School

Counselor Association (ASCA) members. The theoretical models incorporated into the study were the cognitive developmental domain of Loevinger's ego development and Maslach's perspective of burnout. Participants were mailed a demographic questionnaire, the Washington University Sentence Completion Test (Form-81), and the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS). The response rate was 40.9%. Path analyses were applied to test the research hypotheses and confirmed through stepwise linear multiple regression and Pearson product-moment correlation.

Lambie (2002) found that his hypothesis that higher ego development scores would contribute to a lower degree of burnout was not supported, although higher ego development did correlate with higher level of personal accomplishment. School counselors in the sample scored at the moderate level of emotional exhaustion, suggesting that school counselors may need to receive occupational support. Lambie questioned the appropriateness of use of the MBI-HSS for measurement of burnout among school counselors. His factor analysis revealed that the total score did not fit within one factor; however, this finding has not been replicated in other studies.

Overall, investigations of personality factors have been unsuccessful. However, in several studies on burnout, age and years of experience on the job have been significantly correlated with levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Gann, 1979; Lambie, 2002; Maslach & Jackson, 1982). Helping professionals in general exhibit the highest degree of burnout when first entering the field and then again after a significant number of years in the profession (Gann, 1979; Heckman, 1980). However, Lambie (2002) found that experience has the greatest impact

on the three burnout factors, with newer professionals having lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Gender was found to have a significant effect on depersonalization (Lambie, 2002). In fact, a consistent finding across burnout samples is that males tend to score higher on depersonalization than females (Greenglass & Burke, 1988; Maslach & Jackson, 1979). The most common explanation for this seems to be that in popular American culture, men are socialized to inhibit expression of feeling and tenderness, whereas females are conditioned to nurture and cooperate with others (Greenglass & Burke, 1988).

Coping Resources

In studying individual contributors to school counselor burnout, the rationale of such investigations must be considered. The purpose of this particular study was to develop a model that has implications for prevention and/or remediation of school counselors currently experiencing burnout. Because personality dimensions are thought to be static (Zellars & Perrewé, 2001), it may be extremely difficult—perhaps impossible—to enact change short of personality reconstruction. Another (and perhaps more fruitful) way of examining how individual factors contribute to burnout is to consider the role of coping. *Coping* is the nature of the responses that individuals adopt to manage or reduce stress (Altemaier, 1995). Coping strategies are "thoughts or acts that an individual uses to manage the external and/or internal demands of a specific person-environment transaction that is appraised as stressful" (Folkman, 1992, p. 34). If coping mechanisms are inappropriate, stress occurs; thus, the effects of stressors are mediated by coping mechanisms (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978). After forty years of studying stress

and coping, it is understood that people manifest a variety of coping responses (Altemaier, 1995).

Little agreement exists regarding the optimal conceptualization of coping (Heppner, Cook, Wright, & Johnson, 1995). One common distinction in the literature is between coping resources—those available—and those actually used. Actually, coping responses were initially conceptualized as traits, in that people may be considered good or bad "copers." However, later approaches altered this perception (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) when coping transactions (ongoing sequences in which available coping responses and resources influence evaluations of the stressor, coping response, and consequences) were identified. Evidence supports the existence of situationally-linked coping responses as well as stable coping styles, in which personal traits such as the impulse to approach or avoid stressful situations may translate into a personal style or preference for certain coping responses (Parkes, 1986). An individual's coping style and ability to resist stress can be instrumental in molding the effects of high stress, as particular coping approaches or styles are thought to help certain individuals resist burnout (Altemaier, 1995). People generally have coping preferences, but these preferences can be mediated by the individual with proper education and/or remediation (Parkes, 1990; Parkes, Mendham, & von Rabenau, 1994). Thus, coping is more amenable to change than personality traits. Situational characteristics, particularly the controllability of the stressor, have been found to elicit varied coping responses (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). Effective coping responses of those in the educational system are particularly relevant because educators have

responsibility for decisions affecting the safety, well-being, and in cases the future of the children with whom they are entrusted (Anderson, 2000).

In many instances, similar constructs and relationships among variables are examined in different bodies of literature, especially between the coping and applied problem-solving literature (Heppner, Cook, Wright, & Johnson, 1995). A "hardiness" typified by stronger commitment to self, an attitude of vigorousness toward the environment, a sense of meaningfulness, and a coping style that includes awareness, self-insight, and a direct approach to problem-solving have been found to nullify or modify the physiological effects of high stress (Kobasa, 1979). How professionals cope and how this strain affects their feelings about their personal accomplishment appear to be related to burnout (Lambie, 2002).

A primary distinction in the burnout literature is that between problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. The former coping response is directed at the stressor, whereas the latter allows the individual to manage the associated emotional fallout. There is much support in the literature for a negative correlation between active or behavioral problem-focused coping strategies and burnout (Anderson, 2000). However, Zellars and Perrewé (2001) argued that too often researchers have erroneously concluded that problem-focused strategies are more effective than emotion-focused strategies. They pointed out that much empirical data support emotion-focused coping (exemplified by emotional social support) as a buffer against burnout.

Available resources—including intra-individual, interpersonal, and environmental—as well as the specific nature of the stressful episode, all contribute to a

person's ability to cope and the strategies utilized (Anderson, 2000). These strategies may or may not be effective at ameliorating the effects of stressors, and it stands to reason that lack of success in individual coping efforts at work may increase perceived occupational stress. "Under stressful working conditions, counselors using poor coping strategies may become disenchanted, discouraged, irritated, frustrated, and confused, resulting in poor job performance and lowered self-esteem" (Kesler, 1990, p. 304). In the long run, these negative stress effects can lead to physiological and biochemical changes accompanied by psychosomatic and even chronic symptoms like heart disease (Hinton & Rotheiler, 1998). Strong beliefs in one's ability to control negative moods might suggest self-efficacy for emotion-focused coping strategies, a behavioral coping style, and high levels of personal control. Thus, it is thought that self-efficacy influences the type of coping mechanism employed (i.e., use of social support and/or behavioral problem-solving (Van Dick & Wagner, 2001).

Self-Efficacy

White (1959) argued that competence is a strong human motive and that achieving a sense of competence in work is a particularly important concern. When one cannot achieve the sense of competence, the result is high levels of stress and in some cases burnout (Cherniss, 1993). Hall (1976) proposed that work motivation and satisfaction are enhanced when a person achieves a goal that is personally meaningful, providing success that enhances involvement in the job, encourages one to fulfill goals, and increases self-esteem. However, a person experiencing failure would psychologically withdraw, leading to lowered standards, increased disinterest and

boredom, less emphasis on intrinsic rewards, increased use of defense mechanisms, and propensity to fight or leave. Hall's (1976) description of the importance of competence resembles the depersonalization dimension of burnout and has many implications for a person's self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is "people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 1989, p. 1175). Researchers have suggested there is a clear relationship between career behavior and self-efficacy (Bush, Powell, & Herzberg, 1993). Self-efficacy beliefs exert an insidious influence on the judgments that those within the educational domain make about the behavior of their colleagues, as well as how they assess the ability of the school system to meet its obligations to students; ultimately, self-efficacy affects the individual's commitment to and satisfaction with the school (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni, & Petitta, 2003).

Self-efficacy can make a difference in the way people think, feel, and act. A strong belief in oneself facilitates cognitive abilities in many contexts, influencing decision-making and achievement (Schwarzer & Born, 1997). A high sense of self-efficacy makes life less stressful, whereas low self-efficacy is accompanied by strong distress (Schwarzer & Born, 1997) and is associated with depression, anxiety, and helplessness. People with low self-efficacy also tend to harbor pessimistic thoughts about their performance and personal development (Bandura, 1989). It is thought that common work pressures gradually erode professionals' beliefs in their ability to organize and implement the actions required to produce meaningful goals within the workplace. Individuals' beliefs in their own efficacy have effects on course of action, degree of effort

invested, perseverance in the face of obstacles, resilience, stress endurance, and eventual level of accomplishment (Bandura, 1997). Additionally, individuals with high levels of self-efficacy may view stressful events as more controllable and their coping abilities may be more stable than those with low levels of self-efficacy.

Possessing an array of strong coping resources aids one in resisting stress and burnout. These resources are related to one another, and as one resource is depleted another may be substituted. In fact, one resource may limit or prevent depletion of a second resource. Because these coping resources are reciprocal, resource loss and gain may occur in spirals. One loss may follow another, with each resulting in depletion of resources for confronting the next threat. For example, high self-efficacy increases both an individual's social desirability and his or her ability to employ social resources during times of need (Hansson, Jones, & Carpenter, 1984; Hobfoll & Lieberman, 1987). Thus, if a person has low self-efficacy, this may reduce available support from friends; at the same time, low levels of social support may negatively affect self-efficacy (Cherniss, 1993). Similarly, a gain in resources may prompt individuals to attempt further risking and result in greater benefits. For example, success in consulting with one teacher may increase a school counselor's sense of mastery. In turn, that school counselor will be likely to take on additional and more difficult consultation tasks, especially if provided added resources based on task completion (such as a more positive perception of school emotional climate, which may be impacted by the relationship the school counselor built with the initial consultee).

A literature review on the construct of self-efficacy confirms its importance as one of the factors useful in explaining both performance and effectiveness of individuals within schools and organizations (Sutton & Fall, 1995). The strength of efficacy expectations determines whether individuals try to cope with difficult situations, how much effort people expend, and how long they persist in the face of obstacles (Bandura, 1977). For example, teachers with high self-efficacy have been found to have a preference for becoming involved, being committed, and feeling personal control in their positions (Thomson & Wendt, 1995). Without a sense of mastery or competence, there is little chance of adaptation, and burnout becomes more likely. Self-efficacy has been linked to commitment and motivation as well as stress (Bandura, 1989), and thus to burnout (Cherniss, 1993).

When faced with institutional constraints such as role conflict, the more efficacious school counselor will engage in advocacy for the profession, and if efforts meet with repeated failure, such an individual will eventually look for a better environment in which to work. Thus, strong self-efficacy ultimately promotes environmental change as well as individual evolution. In contrast, Litt (1988) found that the positive effects of personal control are dependent on the extent to which individuals have high levels of self-efficacy. When there are opportunities for personal control of stressors in the environment, but the individual lacks adequate levels of self-efficacy, adjustment may be negatively affected. Thus, school counselors who are low in self-efficacy will tend to react to the autonomy implied by role ambiguity with apathy, resignation, and cynicism. Generally, however, the role of self-efficacy in determining

interactive responses to control and work stress has received minimal attention (Schuabroeck and Merritt, 1997).

Researchers have demonstrated that socially supportive relationships contribute greatly to emotional adjustment, well-being, and the ability to maintain identity through stressful times (Cobb, 1976; Cutrona & Russell, 1990; Fenlason & Beehr, 1997; Greenglass & Burke, 1987; Gottlieb, 1983; Moracco, Butcke, & McEwen, 1984; Pearson, 1986). Maddux and Lewis (1995) stressed that self-efficacy could be increased by addressing the social interactions within organizations. Relatedly, Hauch (1979) reported that participation in decision-making is associated with productivity. This finding is consistent with the idea that participation in decision-making by teachers can lead to a greater sense of ownership in the process, as well as increased self-efficacy. In a study of teacher burnout, Farber and Miller (1981) reported that much of teacher dissatisfaction was related to school organizational factors; the result was a lack of cohesiveness among staff. Most importantly, in his empirical study of teacher burnout, Ashton (1985) stated that "the lack of collegial and administrative support, and sense of powerlessness that comes from limited collegial decision-making make it difficult for teachers to maintain a strong sense of self-efficacy" (p. 28).

Organizational factors are thought to influence school counselor efficacy similarly to the way they influence teacher efficacy (Sutton & Fall, 1995). Many researchers (e.g., Heichbeyer, 1975; Mayer et al., 1983; Wiles & Lovell, 1975)have found support for the notion that the quality of the relationship between counselor and principal, as well as the quantity of positive interactions, are vital to optimal counselor self-efficacy and

contribute to the effectiveness of the school counseling program. Previous researchers have found that lack of collegial and administrative support is negatively correlated with self-efficacy (Sutton & Fall, 1995). Interestingly, Sutton and Fall (1995) found that colleague support was the strongest predictor of school counselor efficacy, and that administrator support for the counselor and the school counseling program had the second most significant influence.

Some authors (Bandura, 1995; Schwarzer & Born, 1997) have considered self-efficacy to fulfill a moderating role between work and stress. Jex and Bliese (1999) found that self-efficacy moderates the relationship between certain stressors, such as the number of hours worked, work overload, and task meaning, and influenced job satisfaction, physical symptoms, attrition, and organizational commitment. Thus, self-efficacy has a strong positive relationship with job satisfaction but not with work overload. Therefore, organizational commitment stays relatively high for people with high levels of self-efficacy, even under conditions of high overload, while this is not the case for those with low self-efficacy (Jex & Bliese, 1999). As Leiter (1991) suggested, linking burnout with self-efficacy can point to some valuable new directions for burnout research, theory, and prevention.

Bandura (1986) argued that people's responses to the environment will differ in important ways, depending on the strength of their self-efficacy; at the same time, he stated that an individual in an environment that undermines self-efficacy will not feel as efficacious. The explanation of the seeming illogicality is that environmental factors influence a person's self-efficacy in a reciprocal relationship (Bandura, 1986). Therefore,

attempts at implying causation may be deceptive, as interactive influences seem to exist among self-efficacy, personality, and environment. This may explain why school climate has been found to be a viable influence on the self-efficacy of school counselors (Mayer, Butterworth, Komoto, & Benoit, 1983), whereas other results indicate that school counselor self-efficacy influences school climate (Sutton & Fall, 1995). Sutton and Fall (1995) advocated that the relationships between environmental variables and counselor self-efficacy should be explored, as should the relationship between efficacy, school climate, and organizational structures. Lambie (2002) argued that the role of self-efficacy in relation to burnout and social support merits further investigation.

Social Support from Family and Friends

Socially supportive relationships and effective social networks influence emotional well-being, physical health, and work performance (Pearson, 1986). *Social support* is encouragement from others, such as friends and family members (Winnubst, 1993), and it has been found to have a buffering function for employees (Cohen & Willis, 1985; Kirmeyer & Dougherty, 1988). Emotional social support includes talking, listening, and expressing concern or empathy for a distressed individual (Fenlason & Beehr, 1994). Individuals with strong social support systems are thought to recover from stress and trauma better than the unsupported (Baumeister, Faber, & Wallace, 1999).

There is much empirical corroboration that emotional social support is a valuable and powerful coping response that shields people from burnout (Zellars & Perrewé, 2001). A sense of being loved and cared for by others contributes to psychological and physical well-being (Bandura, 1995; Mandy, Saeter, & Lucas, 2004). Family and social

networks, especially stable spousal relationships, are particularly important in assuaging burnout. The emotional support provided by such relationships may help people to cope with work stresses and therefore reduce effects of burnout (Fenlason & Beehr, 1994). Specifically, married professionals have been found to experience less intense feelings of psychological exhaustion and cynicism toward clients (Maslach, 1982) and to feel a higher level of personal accomplishment (Acker, 2003).

Researchers have indicated that social support plays an important factor in workers' ability to cope with a stressful work environment. Social support variables have statistically significant negative correlations with role conflict, role ambiguity, and emotional exhaustion. Seeking emotional social support also has been linked to individual self-efficacy Cherniss, 1993) as well as to characteristics of the stressor (Cutrona & Russell, 1990). Cherniss (1989) highlighted that social support strengthens self-efficacy, which can help to diminish the threat and value of potential stressors. Supervisory support, support from co-workers, and support from the worker's environment outside the workplace are possible factors that can mitigate stress (Acker, 2003).

However, Dunkel-Schetter (1984) noted that more social support is offered to individuals who coped effectively—ironically, those who probably needed less support. People who are burnt out, exhausted, and depersonalized are less likely to make friends and maintain interpersonal relationships (Greenglass, Fiksenbaum, & Burke, 1996). Sadly, the individuals who are facing more severe problems are less likely to obtain continued help because, as time progresses, there is a likelihood of resource depletion.

For example, overly needy individuals may call on social resources often and to such an extent that alienates the available support network. Therefore, it may be that using social support as one's sole coping resource comes at a cost. When the need is chronic and reciprocity is limited, the future availability of support decreases. Social support may be most effective for those experiencing slight to moderate levels of burnout. Hobfoll and Lerman (1988, 1989) found that under conditions of chronic stress, both the availability and the benefit of social support decline. Thus, the experience of chronic stress is likely to deplete social resources, decrease attempts to seek support, and leave individuals increasingly vulnerable to burnout (Shirom, 1989).

Active Coping and Behavioral Problem-Solving.

A wide variety of research results suggest that coping and problem-solving activities play a role in physical and psychological well-being when people are confronted with negative or stressful life events (D'Zurilla & Nezu, 1982; Friedman, 1991). Social problem-solving has been defined as a set of instrumental, cognitive-behavioral coping skills necessary for adaptation in everyday life (D'Zurilla & Nezu, 1982). Social problem solving abilities are generally categorized into two components that operate in the problem-solving process: active and avoidance coping. Conceptualizing coping on this approach-avoidance continuum appears useful, but it is a new conceptualization that has been underutilized in occupational stress research (Anderson, 2000).

The phrases active coping, direct coping, control coping, and behavioral problem-solving often are used interchangeably in the literature, as the construct is the same:

efforts to actively control a stressor by cognitively analyzing the situation and/or by concrete action in order to solve or overcome the problem (Altemaier, 1995). Job control generally is positively related to workers' well being; overall level of emotional exhaustion is lower in situations with high job control than in situations with low job control. Moreover, for people who are inclined to use control (who are high in active coping), job control acts as a stress-buffer, as it moderates the increase in emotional exhaustion due to job demands.

Active coping efforts are most effective in situations in which opportunities to control stressors are perceived, either on the cognitive or on the behavioral level (Latack, 1986). In contrast, avoidance coping, which delays action to solve a problem, demonstrates a strong negative relationship to good coping outcomes (Heppner et al., 1995). Both forms of coping show strong stability over time, suggesting that individuals are consistent in their choice of coping styles across a range of stressors in the workplace (Altemaier, 1995). Further, disengagement coping (avoidance) appears to be influenced by a "higher order" factor, or trait, which is speculated to be neuroticism or a propensity to negative affect (Bowman & Stern, 1995). Thus, those who rely on avoidance coping might experience more negative moods, resulting in reduced flexibility, distortion of information, interference in retrieval and/or storage of information, and impairment of solution implementation (Heppner & Krauskopf, 1987). Avoidance coping has been associated with low self-efficacy; people who report less effective problem-solving abilities likely have difficulty encoding new information and may be cognitively inflexible when they feel challenged (Nezu, 1987).

Negative beliefs might nullify problem solving by distorting information about the problem and leading to overload as the person becomes preoccupied about his or her inability to succeed in resolving the issue, hold in any emotional reactions, and manage the likelihood of failure (Nezu & Perri, 1989). Further, the negativity becomes reinforced. Minor problems exacerbate, increasing the sense of ineffectiveness and decreasing motivation for output of effort (Nezu, 1987). Thus, persons with a negative and avoidant orientation are more likely to experience occupational burnout (Elliott, Shewchuk, Hagglund, Rybarczyk, & Harkins, 1996), and cognitive inflexibility and lack of motivation may result in poor job performance. Johnson and Hall (1988) mentioned the supplementary importance of social support, in that it is possible that individuals who do not use control-oriented strategies to cope with high demands rely more often on their emotional-based coping (such as support from friends). However, when social support is the only coping strategy utilized in an unceasing situation spiraling out of control, burnout may increase (Shirom, 1989).

Converging evidence indicates that self-reported problem solving abilities are related to adjustment. Researchers have found that both problem orientation components can often predict depressive behavior, health complaints, anxiety, neurotocism, and negative affect under general and stressful conditions (Dugas, Letarte, Rheaume, Freeston, & Ladouceur, 1995; Elliott, Herrick, MacNair, & Harkins, 1994; Elliott, Sherwin, Harkins, & Marmarosh, 1995). These relationships may be due in some measure to the ability of the problem-orientation component to regulate mood (Elliott, Shewchuk, Richeson, Pickelman, & Franklin, 1996) and to the positive expectancies

associated with the problem orientation (Chang & D'Zurilla, 1996), which serves to regulate mood under general and stressful conditions (Elliott, et al., 1995, 1996). Intriguingly, behavioral problem solving has been uniquely associated with behaviors necessary for self care (Godshall & Elliott, 1997; Herrick, Elliott, & Crow, 1994).

In four studies, interaction effects of job stressors and active coping were demonstrated. Parkes (1990) found that direct, action-oriented coping buffers the negative effects of job stress on mental health outcomes for a sample of teachers-in-training. Koeske and Kirk (1993) replicated this finding in a study of case managers, confirming that active coping buffers the effect of job stressors on negative job-related outcomes (e.g., burnout, job dissatisfaction, physical complaints, and intention to quit). Additionally, De Rijk, Le Blanc, Schaufeli, and Jonge (1998) argued that active coping is beneficial due to the use of job control: only active copers will be inclined to use job control as a means to modulate various types of job stress.

Anderson (2000) found that workers who rely on active coping strategies do less depersonalizing with their clients and feel a greater sense of personal accomplishment, whereas workers who use avoidant coping strategies are more likely to suffer emotional exhaustion, feelings of depersonalization, and a diminished sense of personal accomplishment. The findings confirmed that the coping strategies used by the sample of child protective services workers did vary according to the level of burnout. Furthermore, they suggested that while using active coping strategies may moderate a tendency toward depersonalization and a sense of reduced personal accomplishment, it did not save them from feeling the effects of emotional exhaustion. Anderson's study

suggests that greater use of social support, as an emotion-focused coping strategy, might be needed for prevention and remediation of burnout. This study and others imply that, in situations where an individual perceives no personal control, an active strategy is counterproductive and may eventually lead to "learned helplessness" (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978). Thus, people who balance behavioral problem solving with emotion-based coping may be better adjusted and less burned out (Altemaier, 1995).

By examining how researchers in the helping and educational disciplines have investigated differing aspects of burnout, it is possible to gain an appreciation for the existence of contextual and personal factors and how they may impact burnout. Unfortunately, most of the literature previously detailed has not been synthesized and utilized to create a model of counselor burnout, much less school counselor burnout.

Critique of the School Counselor Literature on Burnout

Of the fifteen located empirical studies related to school counselor burnout, ten identified organizational sources of stress and two focused on internal factors. However, the research findings that are available may be questioned due to methodological procedures. For example, Cummings and Nall (1983) assessed burnout using a single-item questionnaire. Lynch (1981) conducted a nationwide survey of school counselors and made generalizations from a return rate of only 45 percent. Furthermore, he and many other researchers utilized instruments developed with no apparent validity or reliability. Thus, findings must be applied with considerable caution.

All studies relied on self-report data. However, long time frames for recollection and wording of definitions may tend to underestimate the incidence of burnout (Maslach,

1982). It is notable that the time in the semester in which sampling occurs may have some impact on the results. For example, school counselors sampled early in the school year may be dealing with scheduling concerns and report higher levels of burnout than those sampled a few weeks later. The vast majority of researchers did not document the time period in which they sampled their school counselors, nor did they address the potential impact of the ebb and floe of the school year. Longitudinal data would be helpful the in future, as all studies of school counselor burnout relied on single-time sampling.

In the studies in which the methodological aspects were well conceived, sampling procedures led to a lack of generalizability. The majority of the samples were limited in size as well as homogeneity. Throughout the investigation of school counselor burnout, the studies have been largely concerned with the experiences of White, female counselors. Although the majority of school counselors are White and female, we know very little about those school counselors who do not fit this profile. Additionally, there exists the possibility of cross-cultural differences restricting generalizability of findings, as several studies were from extremely different (and at times somewhat isolated) geographical regions. Perhaps because most of the samples of school counselors were homogeneous, moderate variances in scores were commonly found in individual studies.

Many questions remain unanswered, largely due to lack of researcher specificity in their published accounts of burnout investigations. For example, most researchers did not describe whether their sample included counselors new to the job, nor did they document the participants' certification status. Such transitionary periods may be

reflected in—and skew—the existing burnout data. Additionally, the specifics of the student population were seldom mentioned or controlled for. In most cases, student age, ethnicity, and number were left to the readers' imagination.

Several researchers used convenience sampling, sampled counselors who chose to attend a conference, or solely utilized counselors who were members of a specific professional organization such as ASCA. This latter method of sampling seems to be a major limitation as, by definition, a burned out school counselor would be less likely to pay the fee to belong to professional school counseling associations, an amount ranging from $35 to $90 for membership in state organizations and $165 for membership in the American School Counseling Association. Ultimately, it may be argued that counselors experiencing the most severe forms of burnout are likely underrepresented. Just how underrepresented they may be is a matter of concern.

Perhaps there are some built-in limitations when attempting to sample all school counselors and create instrumentation and a procedure that might appeal to even the most burned out of counselors. Survey length and format (mailed paper and pencil booklets) may add to counselors' perceptions of stress; they may be less likely to take time to complete the survey instructions and mail them within the given time frame, thus providing a skewed picture of the state of school counselor burnout. The same may be said for electronic sampling, especially when school counselors are less technological adept or have little time to check e-mail. Clearly, the rationale and methods of obtaining samples of school counselors—as well as the procedures for sampling them—need to be thoroughly and strategically examined and carried out.

The degree to which researchers investigated stress-related constructs and subsequently tied them to burnout seemed to vary almost as much as the sampling practices utilized. Overall, the findings on stress and related terms have not been fully integrated into the burnout literature in school counseling. In most studies, the researchers used a very narrow operational definition of burnout and never tied in related constructs in the existing literature. For example, studies on job satisfaction have rarely been utilized for their benefit to the burnout literature, although much evidence exists that the terms are significantly related. Researchers have generally chosen one or two constructs to investigate and have been less likely to examine how their findings may be compared, synthesized, and integrated to create new understandings and future lines of research.

In the school counseling literature, researchers focused on environment or they focused on individual differences. None focused on how these two dynamics interacted. Researchers have been more interested in isolated constructs rather the systemic interactions of multiple factors. Moderating variables were often not considered, or different moderating variables were considered by researchers in different studies without attempting to integrate findings. Although they present unique challenges, contextual factors and co-occurring organizational and individual processes need to be considered more systematically.

Many of the methods that have been utilized in the past have been too simplistic to fully explain what appears to be a very complex process involving contextual, temperamental, and reciprocal influences. Almost all of the research on school counselor

burnout has been cross-sectional and correlational, which makes it impossible to make conclusions regarding the effects of the interaction of the variables so bidirectionality can be assessed. Until Lambie (2002), no researcher within the school counseling field attempted to integrate knowledge from related fields in order to create a more complete picture of the dynamics involved in burnout. However, his investigation was limited in scope because it looked at only one aspect of individual personality: ego development.

Models of Burnout

In the last three years, two models of burnout from diverse fields have been developed that have contributed greatly to a more complex understanding of the phenomenon. Elloy, Terpening, and Kohls (2001) developed a structural model of burnout among self-managed work team members concerning perceptions of several job and organizational conditions. Their hypotheses were utilized to develop a model that was tested and refined from data collected from 320 employees working in a medium-sized heavy industry manufacturing organization. They found that role conflict contributed to emotional exhaustion, and participation in work teams diminished it. Role conflict, role ambiguity, lack of participation, lack of trust or support from one's supervisor, lack of co-worker support, and lack of job ability were found to contribute to burnout. However, job workload (speed required, hard work, and work quantity) were found to have a negative relationship with depersonalization and burnout, such that challenging work (with adequate time) can actually moderate burnout. The researchers recommended that further research and replications are needed to explore the causal factors that contribute to these differences and specified that their findings were

generalizable only to a specific context. Although individual factors were not included in the model, these researchers integrated many key findings in burnout literature related to environmental factors and utilized sophisticated methods to reveal significant relationships among complex variables.

The second study added individual and personal resource variables into a model addressing similar environmental constructs. Lee, Song, Cho, Lee, and Daly (2003) developed a model of burnout among Korean nurses to identify predictors among individual characteristics, job stress, and personal resources. A cross-sectional correlational design was used in a sample of 178 nurses from general hospitals in southern Korea. The data were collected using paper and pencil self-rating questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, and hierarchical multiple regression. Nurses who experienced higher job stress showed lower cognitive empathy and empowerment. Overall, job stress variables explained 10-20% of the variance in the burnout sub-dimensions. Of these job stress factors, role conflict was the most significant predictor, showing a positive relationship to depersonalization and emotional exhaustion. Role ambiguity was related to personal accomplishment, and role overload was related to emotional exhaustion. Personal resources such as empathy and empowerment were found to account for 10-12% of the variance in burnout. Individual characteristics (age, education, shift) explained 7-9% of the variance in burnout sub-dimensions and were thought to be relatively less significant when considered with job stress or personal resources.

The implications of these studies for school counselor burnout were numerous. These initial models provided evidence that significant relationships exist between certain contextual and individual factors and burnout across diverse occupations. Many of the contextual factors in these two studies are applicable to the work environment of school counselors: role conflict, role ambiguity, and support from colleagues and supervisors (work climate). Additionally, individual variables in the Lee, et al. (2003) study are synonymous with demographic variables in many other studies. Finally, for the first time, individual personal resources have been found to have a significant impact on burnout levels.

Explanation of the Proposed Model

A causal model of burnout among school counselors based on the empirical evidence must incorporate both environmental and individual factors, as well as the interplay between these variables. Unfortunately, because of the interrelationships that exist, clear division of factors into separate constructs is not a simple matter. For example, school climate (perceived social support from colleagues) may be very similar to social support from family and friends. However, negative school climate is part of the school environment, whereas positive social support from family and friends may be hypothesized as providing a buffer against negative school climate and eventual burnout. In addition, the direction of effects is not always clear in the literature, complicating the development of a model. For instance, self-efficacy is thought to moderate one's level of personal accomplishment. However, when one's personal accomplishment decreases, self-efficacy may decrease over time as well. Unfortunately, recursive patterns cannot be

shown with one model. Obviously, there are many ways in which a model with very complex interactions can be configured, but the most parsimonious model is the best solution (Howell, 2002).

As indicated previously, environmental factors have been found to account for the greatest degree of variance in burnout (Lee, et al., 2003), and these factors were the first and most essential step in the creation of the model of school counselor burnout. In specifying the factors with the most empirical support, it became clear that role conflict, role ambiguity, school climate, and supervision were most relevant to school counselors. However, supervision was dropped from the final revision of the model because public middle school counselors in North Carolina commonly do not receive clinical supervision, as this has not been a priority within the state. Although there is support for the role of clinical supervision as a buffer against burnout, this population of counselors would have almost no variation in scores. However, in subsequent refinements and replications of the model with additional samples, supervision may be appropriate for inclusion.

Lee, et al. (2003) found that personal resources (empathy and empowerment) accounted for 10-12% of burnout in nurses. Although school counselors' empathic response has been studied as a factor related to burnout, it is though that lack of empathy may be a symptom of burnout and not a cause. Therefore, coping resources that have substantial empirical support for their relationship to burnout may be more appropriate in a predictive model of school counselor burnout. Thus, variables such as self-efficacy, social support, and behavioral problem-solving—hypothesized in the burnout literature to

have a direct impact on burnout, as well as to moderate the relationship between environment and burnout—were conceptualized as school counselor resources worthy of being included in the model. Statistical analyses were planned to further define the role of coping resources and to determine if they effects were mediating or moderating.

Individual characteristics were the least significant of the factors in burnout (Lee, et al., 2003). In keeping with structural equation modeling, categorical variables such as school counselor gender, age (in decades), education (in increments), ethnicity, school assignment, experience, and student population issues (percentage of minority students and those receiving free lunch) were not directly added to the model but were addressed as demographic factors. Whereas some of these individual factors have been found to significantly relate to burnout, others warrant more investigation and could not be included in the model at this time. Thus, these factors were addressed within the study through descriptive analyses.

Conclusion

In this chapter, Maslach's theory of burnout was reviewed and burnout research was presented and critiqued. Empirical findings on burnout within the school counseling literature were documented, and consistent findings across helping professions were highlighted. A common theme that appeared to emerge was that burnout appears to be caused by environmental and individual factors, as well as the interplay between them. These factors were further investigated, and the proposed model of school counselor burnout was described. In the following chapter, the research procedures and methodology used in the study will be reviewed.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodological issues addressed in the current study. Relevant information concerning the research questions and hypotheses, method of sampling, instrumentation for measuring relevant constructs, procedures for data collection, and necessary statistical analyses will be reported. Figure 2 provides an explanation of graphic symbols utilized for path analysis.

Research Hypotheses

The current study examined the following hypotheses:

H^1: The Climate of School Support Scale (CSSS) will represent one factor—that of school climate—for this sample of middle school counselors.

H^2: The Role Questionnaire (RQ) will represent two factors—those of role conflict and role ambiguity—for the sample of middle school counselors.

H^3: The mean scores of non-rural and rural counselors will differ for each of the seven factors incorporated in the theorized model.

H^4: Rural participants who report a more positive school climate, low role conflict and role ambiguity, high self-esteem, high social support, and high behavioral problem-solving coping resources will indicate different levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment than their non-rural peers.

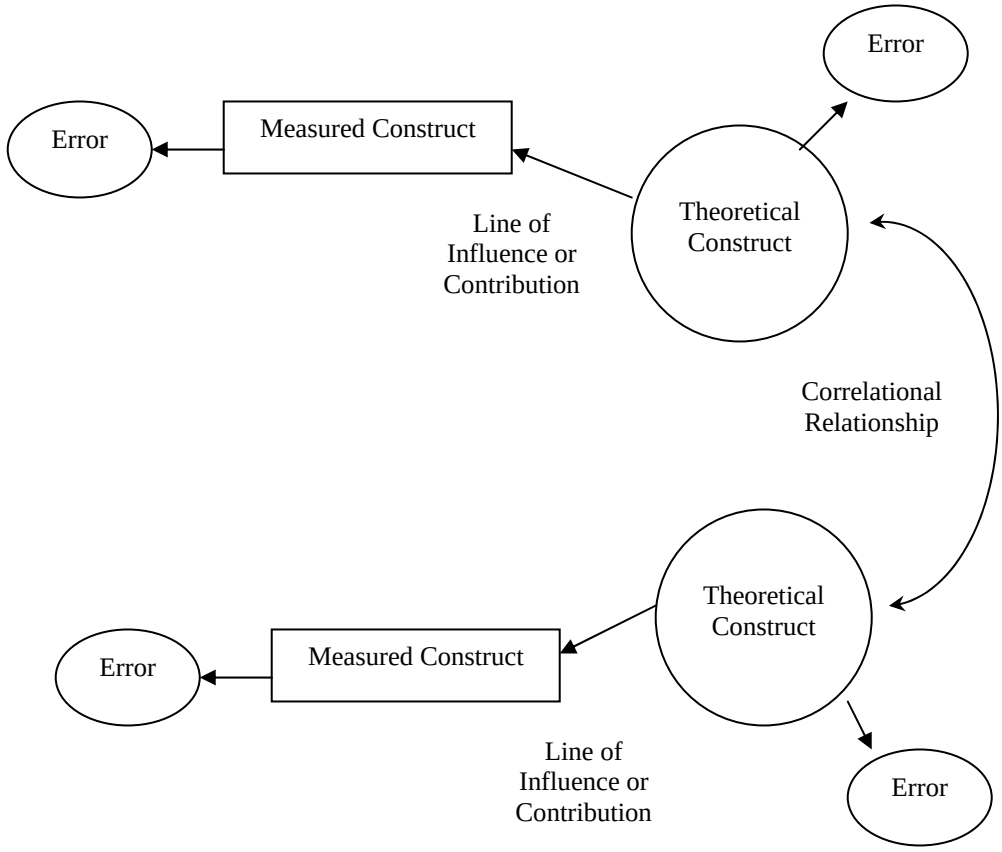


Figure 2. Key to graphic symbols for structural equation modeling.

H^5: The factors comprising the coping resources construct (self-efficacy, social support, and behavioral problem-solving) will moderate the relationship between school environment and burnout factors.

H^6: The theorized structural equation model that considers the relationship of school environment and burnout will fit data for licensed school counselors working in North Carolina public middle schools. See Figure 3.

H^7: The theorized structural equation model will fit differently for rural and non-rural licensed school counselors working in North Carolina public middle schools. See Figure 1, previously depicted.

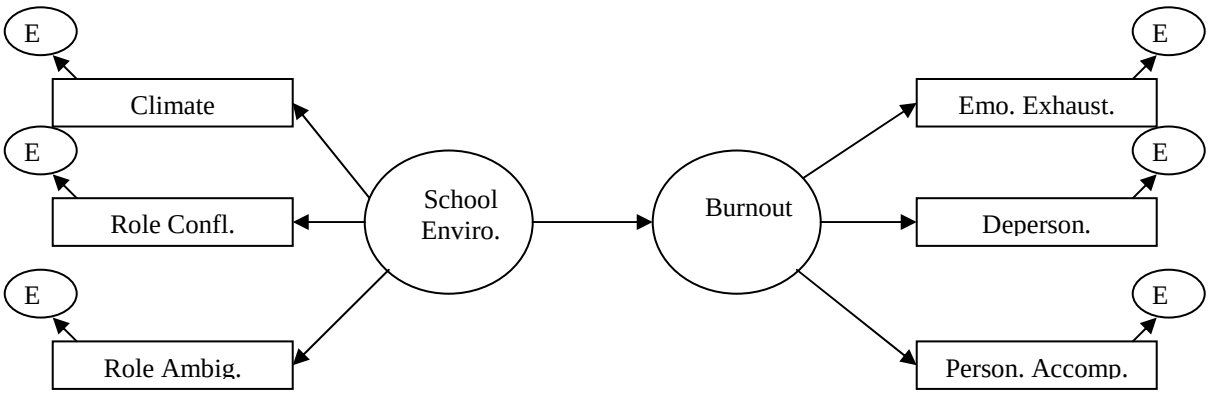


Figure 3. Hypothesized path model of school counselor burnout.

Hypothesis six is a simpler version of hypothesis seven. The full structural model hypothesized (see Figure 1) has three observed *X*-variables, four *Y*-variables, one latent exogenous ksi variable, and two latent endogenous eta variables. The model assumes that school environment explains or predicts school counselor burnout (path B) and that coping resources explains or predicts school counselor burnout (path C). Additionally, it is postulated that school environment will have an indirect effect on school counselor burnout mediated by counselors' coping resources (path A).

Participants

The 1,045 licensed, practicing middle school counselors in the state of North Carolina make up the targeted population for this study. In order to qualify as a study participant, individuals had to possess school counselor certification in the state of North Carolina, have a minimum of two years of experience as a school counselor, and be employed in a North Carolina public middle school. The researcher obtained a list licensed middle school counselors in North Carolina from the state Department of Public Instruction and, from this accessible population, the researcher divided the individuals into two separate populations according to the student population of schools. Rural school counselors (Population A) work in a school located in any incorporated place, Census-designated place, or territory within or outside a consolidated statistical area or core-based statistical area of a large or mid-size city and which is defined as rural by the Census Bureau (NCES, 2004).

Initially, the researcher divided the schools into rural, suburban, and urban populations. However, the participation of a minimum of 200 randomly-selected

counselors from each population (and thus a minimum of 600 total returned packets) were needed to achieve a desired 95% confidence level of representation of each targeted population (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). This categorization was not viable based on the demographics of the North Carolina school system and the number of available middle school counselors. Therefore, with the new division of school counselors into two populations, the participation of a minimum of 400 randomly-selected counselors was required to meet the 95% confidence level of representation.

Instrumentation

The following data collection instruments will be utilized in this study: the Climate of School Support Scale (CSSS), the Multidimensional Support Scale (MSS; Winefield, Winefield, & Tiggerman, 1992), the Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale (GESS; Fibel & Hale, 1978; Fischer & Corcoran, 1994), the Life Events Questionnaire (LEQ; Brugha & Cragg, 1990), the Role Questionnaire (RQ; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970; Freeman & Coll, 1997), the Social Problem-Solving Inventory (SPSI; D'Zurilla & Nezu, 1992); and the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HS; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), the researcher-created School Counselor Demographic Questionnaire (SCDQ), and the researcher-created Contact Sheet. Each instrument is described below.

Climate of School Support Scale

The Climate of School Support Scale (CSSS) is a 7-item instrument developed by the researcher to measure school climate of support and need. The original 15-item instrument was based on the Confident Availability subscale of the Multidimensional

Support Scale (MDSS-CA; Winefield, Winefield, & Tiggerman, 1992), which measures support from family and friends and was also utilized in this study. Development of the CSSS will be described in more detail in the pilot study section of this chapter.

The questionnaire defines support ("encouragement or help") and asks the respondent to rate from one to four on a Likert-type scale (1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, and 4 = usually/always) the degree to which the individual receives support from people in the school environment (principals, teachers, support staff, parents, students, school superintendents, and members of the school community in general). The score is the sum of the item ratings and ranges from 7 to 49. A higher score reflects a more positive, supportive school climate. Utilizing pilot study data, Cronbach coefficient alpha reliability of the CSSS was calculated as .87.

Multidimensional Support Scale

The Multidimensional Support Scale – Confidant Availability Subscale (MDSS-CA; Winefield, Winefield, & Tiggerman, 1992) is a 10-item instrument designed to measure social support—including frequency and adequacy of emotional, practical, and informational support—in adults. Each item is rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 4 for the Availability section (a) and 1 to 3 for the Adequacy section (b). The Availability section asks respondents to rate from one to four the degree to which family and close friends offered help and support in the school counselor's coping in the last month (1 = never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = often, 4 = usually/always) according to seven categories such as, "how often did they really make you feel loved?" The Adequacy section asks respondents to rate from one to three the degree to which the individual

would have liked family and close friends to offer help and support in addition to that provided in the last month (1 = more often, 2 = less often, and 3 = just right) according to the same seven categories as the Availability section.

The MDSS-CA is structured to examine support from family and close friends, with higher scores indicating increased perception of support. The MDSS-CA is scored by summing item scores for seven of the individual factors [items 1a, 2a, 4a, 4b, 5a, 6a, and 7a; where a is the first section (1-4) and b is the second (1-3)]. The MDSS has had very good internal consistency in previous studies, with alphas for the subscales ranging from .81 to .90. No data on stability have been reported. The MDSS has very good concurrent validity, with significant correlations with three measures of psychological well-being: Rosenberg's Self-Esteem and Depressive Affect scales and the General Health Questionnaire. Fischer (1994) found the MDSS to be a better predictor of psychological well-being than measures of health, financial distress, and stressful life events.

Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale—General Efficacy Subscale

The Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale—General Efficacy Subscale, (GESS-GES; Fibel & Hale, 1978; Fischer & Corcoran, 1994) is a 10-item measure that assesses the generalized efficacy of the respondent. The construct of efficacy is defined for this scale as "the belief that in most situations one is able to obtain desired goals" (Fibel & Hale, 1978), and the respondent is asked to answer the questions while thinking specifically about goals associated with the particular school counseling position held. Each item is rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = highly improbable, 2 =

improbable, 3 = equally improbable or probable, 4 = probable, and 5 = highly probable). An example of items on the GESS-GES includes, “In the future I expect that I will be unable to accomplish my goals.”

A score of 5 indicates strong agreement that the item reflects the counselor personally. A score of 1 indicates the respondent perceives that the statement does not reflect the counselor’s beliefs. Factor analysis suggests that the GESS measures three aspects of generalized expectancy, one of which—general efficacy—is used in this study.

Each item is rated in terms of how much it applies to the respondent. Items reflecting failure are reverse-scored (numbers 3, 6, and 8). The score is the sum of the item ratings and ranges from 30 to 150. A higher score reflects an internal locus of control for success. The GESS has excellent reliability for the total score, although data were not presented for factors. Internal consistency using coefficient alpha was .90 for females and .91 for males. Test-retest reliability for a six-week period was .83 for both genders. The validity of the GESS has been tested primarily with concurrent validity procedures. Higher efficacy scores on the GESS were found to have a significant negative correlation to depression, hopelessness, and suicidal ideation (Fischer & Corcoran, 1994).

Life Events Questionnaire

The Life Events Questionnaire (LEQ; Brugha & Cragg, 1990) is a 12-item instrument identifying the presence of common life events that tend to be threatening for an individual. Questions relate to issues such as serious illness, deaths of close friends and family members, major financial crises, and marital difficulties. For the purposes of

this study, the original questionnaire was adapted so the respondent identifies if and when stressful events occurred over the past two years (rather than in the last six months). The LEQ will be used for screening purposes to exclude participants who have experienced severe crises (such as death of children, parent, or spouse; serious illness; and financial crises) which have been theorized to impact burnout.

Role Questionnaire

The Role Questionnaire (RQ; Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970; Freeman & Coll, 1997) is 14-item questionnaire developed to measure the degree of role conflict and role ambiguity on the job. Each item is rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 7. A score of 1 indicates strong agreement that the item reflects the counselor's occupation, and a score of 7 indicates the respondent perceives that the statement does not reflect the job, with other responses falling along this continuum. Examples of questions include, "I have to do things that should be done differently" and "I receive incompatible requests from two or more people."

Schuler, Aldag, & Brief (1977) substantiated that the RQ specifically measures role conflict (Items 1 through 8), which encompasses: conflict between the counselor's internal standards or values and defined role behaviors; conflicts between time, resources, and capabilities and the defined role; and conflict between several roles (role overload); conflicting expectations and incompatible policies; conflicting requests from constituents; and incompatible standards of evaluation. The RQ also measures role ambiguity (Items 9 through 14), which assesses: certainty of duties and authority; clarity of guides, directives, policies, time allocation, and sanctions; and relationships with others.

The role ambiguity items must be reverse-scored because these items are worded positively for clarity. Lower subscale scores on the RQ (under 4.0) are indicative of higher levels of role conflict and role ambiguity. Construct validity and reliability for the Role Questionnaire have been verified through factor analysis (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970) and established across many samples using factor analysis and scale analysis (Schuler, Aldag, & Brief, 1977). Internal reliability for 11 occupational groups was measured at .75 (Schuler, Aldag, & Brief, 1977). Principal components analysis with oblique rotation confirmed that the RQ measured the separate but related constructs of role conflict and role ambiguity. Cronbach coefficient alpha reliabilities were .85 for the role conflict subscale and .86 for the role ambiguity subscale (Schuler, Aldag, & Brief, 1977).

Freeman and Coll (1997) explored the factor structure of the RQ and found a third factor (which they labeled role incongruity) for a sample of high school counselors. However, these findings have not been replicated for elementary, middle school, or junior high counselors. Thus, confirmatory factor analysis will be performed in this study to validate that only two factors emerge from this instrument.

Social Problem-Solving Inventory

The Social Problem-Solving Inventory—Behavior Subscale (SPSI-BS; D'Zurilla & Nezu, 1992) is a 10-item subscale of the Problem-Solving Skills Scale (PSSS; 40 items) of the 70-item version of the SPSI. This subscale measures the degree of behavioral problem-solving by asking the respondent to rate the extent to which statements are true of the individual on a scale of one to five (1 = not true, 2 = slightly

true, 3 = neutral, 4 = true, and 5 = very true). Sample items include "I spend too much time worrying about my problems instead of trying to solve them," and "When I am faced with a difficult problem, I usually try to avoid the problem or I go to someone else for help in solving it."

The SPSI has been administered to adults in college and the general population. The mean for the Behavioral subscale was 171.08 and the standard deviation was 35.73. The SPSI-BS is scored by summing the items. The range for the Behavioral subscale to be used in this study is from 0 to 40. All items except item 5 are reverse-scored. The SPSI has excellent internal consistency, with reported alphas of .94 and .92. The measure also has very good stability, with three-week test-retest correlations of .87 for the SPSI as a whole and .88 for the PSSS.

The SPSI has excellent concurrent validity, with significant correlations between the SPSI as a whole and its two major subscales, as well as with two other problem-solving measures (the Problem-Solving Inventory and the Means-End Problem-Solving Procedure). The SPSI also has very good construct validity, correlating in predicted ways with several other measures, including the Internal-External Locus of Control Scale and the Scholastic Aptitude Test. The SPSI also was found to be sensitive to changes dues to training in problem-solving skills, and demonstrated good predictive ability, negatively correlating with several measures of stress level, life problems, and psychological symptoms.

Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey

The Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HS; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) is a 22-item scale designed to measure three aspects of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment) along two dimensions (frequency and intensity), and is the leading instrument in the field of burnout research (Skaggs, 1999). It has been utilized in over 200 studies on burnout in different occupations.

Respondents are requested to respond to the 22 items with a frequency rating that ranges from "How often": 0 (never); 1 (a few times a year or less); 2 (once a month or less); 3 (a few times a month); 4 (once a week); 5 (a few times a week); and 6 (every day). Examples of items from the three respective subscales are, "I feel emotionally drained from my work" (emotional exhaustion); "I feel I treat some recipients as if they were impersonal objects" (depersonalization); and "I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job" (personal accomplishment).

The MBI is scored using a scoring key. A separate mean score is computed for the frequency dimension of each of the subscales. High mean scores for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and low mean scores for personal accomplishment are indicative of high levels of perceived burnout, with a moderate correlation coefficient between the Emotional Exhaustion and the Depersonalization subscales and a zero correlation coefficient between these subscales and the Personal Accomplishment subscale. Validity of the MBI-HSS has been substantiated through convergent and discriminant validity (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Reliability coefficients for the

three subscales of the MBI-HSS have been reported as .90 (emotional exhaustion), .79 (depersonalization), and .71 (personal accomplishment).

Lambie (2002) performed confirmatory factor analysis in his dissertation study sampling 225 American School Counseling Association (ASCA) members. Although the three subscales of the MBI-HSS have been validated as merging into a single theoretical construct of burnout in many other human services occupations (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996), Lambie's (2002) results did not support the burnout construct as a single variable accounting for the majority of variance between the three subscales. Lambie's study was the first with this finding, and though he urged caution in utilizing this instrument as a total burnout score when sampling school counselors, further data is necessary to replicate and validate his findings. Thus, confirmatory factor analysis will be performed in this study.

School Counselor Demographic Questionnaire

The School Counselor Demographic Questionnaire (SCDQ) is a 9-item researcher-created form asking for participants' (a) gender, (b) age, (c) ethnicity, (d) level of education, (e) years of school counseling experience overall and (f) at current school; and participant school (g) enrollment, (h) student ethnicity, and (i) percentage of students currently receiving free lunch. Additionally, participants were asked to specify (j) membership in professional organizations, (k) licenses and certifications held, (l) if they taught school in the past, and (m) how many years of teaching experience they have. Where possible, data was collected as continuous, although it was analyzed categorically in some cases. See Table 1 for more information.

Contact Sheet

The Contact Sheet (CS) is a six-item questionnaire that asks the participant to submit his/her name, address, phone number, and e-mail contact information. In addition, participants are asked if they would like a summary of research findings and whether they would be willing to be contacted at some point in the future as a follow up to the current study. This sheet will be kept separate from the survey booklet so that participant responses remain anonymous.

The overall booklet, entitled "School Counselor Survey," is a six-page instrument in which the scales are arranged in the following order: the Climate of School Support Scale, the Multidimensional Support Scale, the Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale, the Life Events Questionnaire, the Role Questionnaire, the Social-Problem-Solving Inventory, the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey, and finally the School Counselor Demographic Survey. Scales were ordered so evaluations of others (such as colleagues and family members) were elicited prior to self-ratings. Further, care was taken so that similar Likert-type scales were grouped together. See Table 2 for a comparative summary of information for each scale.

Table 1

School Counselor Demographic Variables

VARIABLE	CATEGORIES
Gender	(1) Female (2) Male
Age	(1) < 30 (2) 30 - 45 (3) > 45
Ethnicity	(1) Asian (2) Black (3) Latino (4) Native-American (5) White (6) Other
Degree Attainment	(1) Bachelor (2) Master's (3) Specialist (4) Doctoral (5) Other

Experience at Current School	(0) Less than 2 years (1) 2 – 5 years (2) 6 – 10 years (3) > 10 years
Total Experience	(0) Less than 2 years (1) 2 – 5 years (2) 6 – 10 years (3) 11 – 20 years (4) > 20 years
Enrollment	(1) Less than 2,000 in district (rural) (2) More than 2,000 in district (non-rural)
Minority %	(1) Under 10% (2) 10 – 25% (3) 26 – 50% (4) 51 – 75% (5) 76 – 90% (6) Above 90%
Free Lunch %	(1) Under 10% (2) 10 – 25 % (3) 26 – 50% (4) 51 – 75 % (5) 76 – 90% (6) Above 90%

Procedures

Members of each randomly selected sample of the rural and non-rural middle school counselor populations were mailed a research packet which included a cover letter, booklet, and contact form (see Appendix A). Specifics related to the study are detailed in the cover letter, which includes a description of the research study and directions (See Item 1, Appendix A). Potential participants were informed in the letter that they will be eligible for a monetary incentive through a random drawing if they return the packet within two weeks of the postal mark date on the packet, as this is thought to increase study participation rates (Yu & Cooper, 1983).

Over-sampling with several reminders sent to participants has been shown to increase both response rates and generalizability of results (Linsky, 1975; Shannon & Bradshaw, 2002). Therefore, after the initial mail distribution of survey packets (which was sent to 650 middle school counselor participants, 325 randomly selected members of each population), two follow-up postcards (Items 11 and 12 of Appendix A) were sent at two-week intervals during the data collection process. Packets were numbered and matched to the list of individual participants in an effort to keep track of those who had already responded.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to field-test the entire survey instrument. This discussion of the pilot study is comprised of the following sections: the pilot study research questions and hypotheses, participants, procedures, and results.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Five questions prompted the pilot study:

RQ_1: Is each scale on the instrument reliable with a middle school counselor sample?

RQ_2: Do the items on the Climate of School Support Scale constitute one factor?

RQ_3: What improvements can be made to the survey instrument according to pilot study participants?

RQ_4: Are there differences between rural and non-rural participants on the given measures?

RQ_5: Are there differences between practicing school counselors and school counselor interns on the given measures?

Five hypotheses tested the research questions above. These hypotheses included:

H_1: Each scale on the instrument is reliable.

H_2: The items on the CSSS make up one factor.

H_3: Improvements can be made to the instrument.

H_4: There will be differences in the mean scores of rural and non-rural participants.

H_5: There will be differences in the mean scores of practicing school counselors and school counselor interns.

Participants

Licensed school counselors currently practicing in North Carolina middle schools make up the targeted population for this dissertation study. However, for the pilot study, the researcher utilized personal contacts within the field (18 school counselors and 6 interns at different public school levels in North Carolina) to elicit a variety of feedback on the instrumentation. See Table 2 for a description of pilot study participants.

Procedures

Piloting was completed in two phases. During the first phase, a focus group of 6 individuals (Group A) were administered the instrument in person while the researcher made notes of the respondents' verbal and nonverbal behavior and answered questions as necessary. Another 19 individuals (Group B) received the survey booklet via mail after changes had been made based on Group A's feedback. All 25 completed instruments were usable as participants met study criteria. In both phases, data were recorded by respondents on a booklet with items and response choices (see Appendix A).

Data was collected in December 2004. Group A participants were 6 professional contacts solicited via phone call. These individuals included current school counseling interns and past school counseling supervisors for the Department of Counseling and Educational Development. All invited individuals agreed to participate and met on campus for purposes of administration. The researcher made observations of the process and answered questions. These individuals were asked for their input on the survey instrument regarding unclear directions, item wording, questions utilized, and time for completion.

Group B participants were practicing school counselors currently taking online post-master's courses at UNCG as well as their school counselor colleagues in public schools across North Carolina. Participation was elicited at the end of one of their CED 688 online class meetings. Individuals who were willing to participate were mailed the survey booklet and letter of introduction. All 19 individuals who agreed to participate returned their survey booklets (100% return rate). These individuals also were asked to provide feedback on the instrumentation and process. Data collection for Group B took four weeks, and participants were emailed reminders at the end of the first two weeks.

Table 2

Demographic Data for 25 Participants by Participant Status

Demographic	School Counselors		Interns		Total	
Variable	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total	19	76%	6	24%	25	100%
Gender						
Female	17	68%	6	24%	23	92%
Male	2	8%	0	0%	2	8%

Demographic	School Counselors		Interns		Total	
Age						
< 30 years	4	16%	6	24%	10	40%
30 – 45 years	12	48%	0	0%	12	48%
> 45 years	3	12%	0	0%	3	12%
Ethnicity						
Black	2	8%	6	24%	2	8%
White	17	68%	0	0%	23	92%
Degree Attainment						
Bachelor’s Only	0	0%	6	24%	6	24%
Master’s	19	76%	0	0%	19	76%
Experience at School						
2 or less	6	24%	6	24%	12	48%
3 – 5 years	7	28%	0	0%	7	28%
6 – 10 years	4	16%	0	0%	4	16%
> 10 years	2	8%	0	0%	2	8%

Demographic	School Counselors		Interns		Total	
Variable	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total Experience						
2 years or less	6	24%	6	24%	12	48%
3 – 5 years	8	32%	0	0%	8	32%
6 – 10 years	3	12%	0	0%	3	12%
> 10 years	2	8%	0	0%	2	8%
District Status						
Rural	6	24%	3	12%	9	36%
Urban	13	52%	3	12%	16	64%
Minority Students						
< 10%	2	8%	1	4%	3	12%
10 – 25%	5	20%	0	0%	5	20%
26 – 50%	1	4%	1	4%	2	8%
51 – 75%	5	20%	2	8%	7	28%
76 – 90%	6	24%	2	8%	8	32%

Demographic Variable	School Counselors N	%	Interns N	%	Total N	%
Free Lunch %						
10 – 25%	2	8%	0	0%	2	8%
26 – 50%	6	24%	1	4%	7	28%
51 – 75%	6	24%	4	16%	10	40%
76 – 90%	3	12%	0	0%	3	12%
> 90%	2	8%	1	4%	3	12%

Data Analyses

To test the first hypothesis, alphas were computed to determine the internal consistency for each scale used in this study. A covariance matrix for the total scores was also assessed to show the factors were related, yet distinct. Hypothesis two necessitated item analysis of the researcher-created Climate of School Support Scale (CSSS). The observations of the participants were compiled and considered for changes to make the instrument more readable. Then, descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were conducted to address the remaining research questions, to include (a) descriptive analyses for hypotheses four and five (i.e., mean scores and standard deviations for each variable), and (b) one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVAs) to

address the remaining research questions. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 8.0, 1998) was used for all data analysis except for the ItemAnal program when item analysis was necessary. The results of the analyses follow.

Results

The results of the pilot study are provided in an abbreviated format, focusing primarily on how the pilot study results impacted changes for the larger study.

To demonstrate reliability and validity for the survey instrumentation, two statistical analyses were conducted for each instrument. As a measure of internal consistency, a Cronbach's alpha was generated and determined. All scales on the instrument were found to be above .70 and ranged from .71 to .87. To address content validity, a correlation of factor means was run, revealing the factors to be unrelated constructs (see Table 3).

Based on item analysis, the Climate of School Support Scale (CSSS) was altered from a 15-item instrument to a 8-item instrument with correlations indicating one underlying factor (see Table 4 for the correlation matrix of the final instrument). As originally conceptualized, the CSSS was created with a 7-item Needs section in addition to the Support section previously mentioned (see Table 5 for the initial and final instrument). In these items, the respondent is asked to rate from one to three on a Likert-type scale (1 = more often, 2 = less often, and 3 = just right) the degree to which the individual would have liked to have specific people in the work environment alter the level of support the counselor currently receives. This section addresses the level of need for additional support in the school environment. A final question asks the respondent to

Table 3

Correlation Matrix of Factors

FACTOR	*Alpha*	SC	RC	RA	SE	SS	BPS	EE	DE	PA
SC	.87	1.00								
RC	.79	.11	1.00							
RA	.84	.10	.23	1.00						
SE	.87	-.24	-.02	-.13	1.00					
SS	.75	.15	.39	-.10	-.08	1.00				
BPS	.75	.19	.10	-.14	.30	.08	1.00			
EE	.81	-.11	-.08	.01	-.01	-.41	.03	1.00		
DE	.75	-.17	-.06	-.11	.01	.01	.39	.43	1.00	
PA	.79	-.04	-.18	-.10	-.03	-.03	-.47	-.29	-.50	1.00

NOTE: SC stands for School Climate, RC for Role Conflict, RA for Role Ambiguity, SE for Self-Efficacy, SS for Social Support, BPS for Behavioral Problem-Solving, EE for Emotional Exhaustion, DE for Depersonalization, PA for Personal Accomplishment.

rate the general climate of the school on a Likert-type scale from one to five (1 = negative, 3 = neutral, and 5 = positive). The score of the 15-item CSSS is the sum of all the item ratings and ranges from 8 to 26, with a higher score reflecting a more positive, supportive school climate. Eight of the items (the Needs section and the general climate question) were left off the version of the CSSS intended for the dissertation study based on item analysis when it was determined that these items represent a factor different from the support factor.

Table 4

Correlation Matrix for Items on the Climate of School Support Scale

Item and Abbreviation		PR	TR	SS	PA	SD	SU	CM
Principal(s)	PR	1.00						
Teachers	TR	.59	1.00					
Support Staff	SS	.50	.60	1.00				
Parents	PA	.50	.62	.37	1.00			
Students	SD	.38	.60	.43	.55	1.00		
Superintendent(s)	SU	.59	.37	.46	.62	.25	1.00	
Community	CM	.50	.38	.46	.46	.49	.46	1.00

Participant responses prompted several changes to the survey booklet, including adding directions to circle all responses, a reminder to participants to think about one's position as school counselor when answering the Generalize Expectancy for Success Scale, and altered shading on the booklet so it would be more readable when copied.

Descriptive statistics were utilized to highlight the demographics of the sample, and ANOVAs were utilized to determine the differences in mean scores of rural and non-rural as well as practicing school counselors and counselor interns.

Rural and Non-Rural Participants

In general, scores for rural and non-rural participants were similar (see Table 6). Non-rural participants rated their schools as being more positive, although both groups fell in the middle range of responses. Role conflict was higher for rural participants (moderate), whereas non-rural participants reported low levels of role conflict. Role ambiguity for rural participants was higher than for non-rural participants, and both fell within the moderate range. Non-rural participants reported higher efficacy, although for these variables all group means fell within moderate ranges. Rural participants' mean scores for social support from family and friends were in the high

Table 5

Changes to the Climate of School Support Scale

Climate of School Support Scale (Pilot Study Version)

Support has been defined as encouragement or help. Please indicate the degree to which you believe each statement applies to you personally by CIRCLING the appropriate number. You will give two answers per line.

	How often are the following groups supportive of your efforts as school counselor?				You would have liked them to be supportive of your efforts…		
	Never	Some-times	Often	Usually/ Always	More often	Less often	Just right
1. Principal(s) in your school	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
2. Teachers in your school	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
3. Support staff in your school	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
4. Parents of students in your school	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
5. Students in your school	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
6. School superintendent(s)	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
7. Members of your school community in general	1	2	3	4	1	2	3

8. What is the general climate of your school?	Negative		Neutral		Positive
	1	2	3	4	5

Climate of School Support Scale (Final Version)

Support has been defined as encouragement or help. Please indicate the degree to which you believe each statement applies to you personally by CIRCLING the appropriate number.	How often are the following groups supportive of your efforts as school counselor?			
	Never	Some-times	Often	Usually/ Always
1. Principal(s) in your school	1	2	3	4
2. Teachers in your school	1	2	3	4
3. Student support services staff	1	2	3	4
4. School staff (secretaries, custodians, etc.)	1	2	3	4
5. Parents of students in your school	1	2	3	4
6. Students	1	2	3	4
7. School superintendent(s)	1	2	3	4
8. Members of your school community in general	1	2	3	4

range, whereas non-rural participants' scores fell within the moderate range. Rural participants also rated themselves as utilizing more behavioral problem-solving than did non-rural participants, although both groups' mean scores fell in the high range. Rural participants' mean burnout score was in the moderate range, and non-rural participants'

mean burnout score was in the low range. Rural participants reported low personal accomplishment and non-rural participants reported moderate levels of personal accomplishment. Rural participants reported higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, although these variables fell within the moderate range for both groups overall.

Counselor and Intern Participants

Practicing school counselors reported low role conflict, whereas school counseling interns reported moderate role conflict in their schools. Interns also reported higher levels of role ambiguity than did practicing school counselors, although both mean scores fell within the moderate range. Interns rated school climate of support as high, whereas practicing school counselors' rated their climate of support as moderate. Efficacy was moderate for both groups, and the mean score for interns was higher than for school counselors. Social support from family and friends was reported as high for both groups, but interns' mean score was higher than for school counselors. School counselors reported a higher mean score for behavioral problem-solving, although both groups fell within the high range for this variable. Burnout for school counselors was moderate, whereas it was low for interns. School counselors had higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, but they also reported more personal accomplishment than did interns. Emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment means fell within the moderate range for both groups. However, school counselors' mean depersonalization score was moderate, whereas interns' mean depersonalization score was low.

Limitations

An a priori analysis for a two-sample ANOVA with an effect size of .25, alpha of .01, and resulting power of .80 indicated that a sample of at least 128 subjects was required for this study. Unfortunately, with a pilot sample of 25, the power was not sufficient to determine whether there were significant differences among these groups, especially since overutilization of ANOVA necessitates smaller approximations of alpha to minimize probability of obtaining both Type I errors (rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true) and Type II errors (rejecting the null hypothesis when it is false). Thus, the test statistics are not reported. These pilot study results are intended purely for description and cannot be utilized to determine significance of difference. Such determinations were undertaken during the larger study.

Statistical Analyses

The purpose of this study was to determine the amount of variance in burnout that could be accounted for by the independent variables and examine how the specified models fit the data. Statistical analytic procedures included a descriptive analysis of the demographic information and responses to test instruments, as well as correlational analyses of the factors represented by each scale. Alphas were computed to determine internal consistency for each scale. Additionally, descriptive statistics were used to describe subjects as preliminary analyses. Research hypotheses one and two were tested through factor analysis and Cronbach's alpha.

Hypothesis three was tested by utilizing Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) for each of the mean scores of scales utilized in the survey instrument. Analysis of Variance

(ANOVA) is the most used statistical technique in psychological research (Howell, 2002). It deals with differences between or among sample means and two or more independent variables simultaneously, asking not only about the individual effects of each variable but also about the interacting effects of two or more variables. Assumptions underlying the use of ANOVA include homogeneity of variance (i.e., each of the populations has the same variance), that the scores for each variable are normally distributed around their mean, and that a standard null hypothesis may be utilized (e.g., the researcher wants to know if the hypothesis is completely true or false).

The fourth hypothesis was tested by computing correlation matrices for rural and non-rural school counselors by using Pearson Product-Moment correlation. Hypothesis five was tested by utilizing the multiple regression solution for moderated relationships (Howell, 2002). Finally, research hypotheses six and seven were tested using exploratory factor analysis and structural equation modeling. Results of these statistical analyses will be reported in the following chapter.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. First, investigations of the reliability of the scales utilized in the study suggest they are not be as robust as anticipated. The findings are generalizable only to middle school counselors within North Carolina, and it is possible that participants who volunteered to complete the study booklet have different characteristics than those who chose to not do so. It is possible that some school counselors answered the items based on social desirability rather than how they really feel. This may have skewed the results in a positive way or created inconsistency in the

responses. Although pains were taken to make the instrument as short as possible, it may be that some burned out school counselors did not take time to fill it out. Additionally, the timing of the school year may have some bearing on the level of burnout reported by school counselors. Finally, there may be unidentified factors that created "noise" in the findings.

Conclusion

Despite the limitations noted above, this is the first investigation of a complex, integrated model of burnout for counselors. Several key contributions will result from determining the amount of variance in burnout that can be accounted for by the independent variables and examining how the specified model fits the data. Results of this investigation will be documented next.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The results of the study are described in this chapter. Descriptive data for the participants is presented and then the research hypotheses are addressed. Hypotheses one and two were tested through factor analyses of the Climate of School Support Scale (CSSS) and the Role Questionnaire (RQ). Hypothesis three was assessed through parametric statistics, specifically Analyses of Variance (ANOVA). Hypothesis four was addressed with correlational statistical procedures. Hypothesis five was evaluated with multiple regression analyses. Finally, hypotheses six and seven were tested through confirmatory path analysis of structural equation models.

Sampling Procedures

After the study was approved by the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Institutional Review Board, six hundred fifty-five (655) survey packets were mailed on March 8, 2005. One week later, reminder postcards (see Appendix A, Item 11) were mailed. The following week, another reminder postcard was mailed (see Appendix A, Item 12). By April 4, four hundred fourteen (414) middle school counselors had responded by mailing back their completed surveys, resulting in a return rate of 63.6%. Of the 414 returned surveys, 37 did not completely answer the demographic information. Thus, the rate of complete, returned surveys was 58%. Results were analyzed for those items in which partial data were available for respondents.

Demographic Data

Demographic data for the 414 middle school counselors who participated in the final study were collected. The information obtained included participants' (a) age, (b) gender, (c) ethnicity, (d) level of education, (e) years of school counseling experience overall and (f) at current school; and participant school (g) student enrollment, (h) student ethnicity, and (i) percentage of students currently receiving free lunch. Additionally, respondents were asked to specify membership in professional organizations, licensure and/or certifications earned, previous status as a school teacher, and years teaching. Tabulated data are reported in Table 6 below.

The Participants

As indicated by the data, more females than males (81% and 19% respectively) volunteered to participate in the study. Mean age of the 414 participants was 43.34 years of age (*SD* = 10.03), and the range was 24-65 years. Overall, 79% of the participants identified themselves as White, 18% as Black, and 3% as other. Of these respondents, two identified themselves as Latino (0.5%), three identified themselves as Native American (0.7%), and five identified themselves as Other (1.2%). All participants reported having attained a master's degree, although a minority (8%) had more education. Of these, 20 people (5%) had attained specialist degrees, 4 respondents had earned doctorates (1%), and eight people (2%) reported having participated in other forms of post-master's education.

Descriptive data and measures of central tendency indicated that mean school counseling experience for the 414 participants was 14.06 years (*SD* = 7.97), ranging from

2 to 37 years. The majority of the respondents (38%) had between ten and twenty years of experience as school counselors, followed by those with six to ten years of experience (23%) and over twenty years of experience (23%). Only 14% of the participants had less than six years of experience as school counselors. Mean time in present position for the respondents was 4.93 years (*SD* = 4.42), ranging between 0 and 25 years. The majority of experience as school counselors, followed by those with six to ten years of experience in the same position (10%). It was less common for the participants to have been employed for more than twenty years (1%) than for them to be in their first year as a school counselor at the current school (5%).

Table 6

Demographic Data of Study Participants

Demographic	Non-Rural		Rural		Total	
Variable	*n*	%	*n*	%	*N*	%
Total	283	69%	128	31%	411	100%
Gender						
Female	228	81%	106	83%	334	81%
Male	55	19%	22	17%	77	19%

Demographic	Non-Rural		Rural		Total	
Variable	*n*	%	*n*	%	*N*	%
Age						
< 30 years	30	11%	19	15%	49	12%
30 – 45 years	116	41%	57	45%	173	42%
> 45 years	136	48%	52	41%	188	46%
Ethnicity						
White	217	77%	108	84%	325	79%
Black	57	20%	18	14%	75	18%
Other	8	3%	2	2%	10	3%
Teaching Status						
Former Teacher	156	55%	49	38%	205	50%
Non-Teacher	126	45%	49	62%	205	50%

Demographic	Non-Rural		Rural		Total	
Degree Attainment						
Master's Only	260	92%	119	93%	379	92%
Post-Master's	23	8%	9	10%	32	8%
Professional Affiliation						
Membership	192	68%	90	70%	282	69%
No Membership	89	32%	38	30%	127	31%
Licensing/Credentialing						
School Counselor Only	188	67%	92	72%	280	68%
Additional Licensure	94	33%	36	28%	130	32%
Total Experience						
< 6 years	39	14%	20	16%	59	14%
6 – 10 years	62	22%	32	25%	94	23%
10 – 20 years	111	39%	50	39%	161	39%
< 20 years	70	25%	26	20%	96	23%

Demographic Variable	Non-Rural *n*	%	Rural *n*	%	Total *N*	%
Experience (CS)						
First year	13	5%	9	7%	22	5%
2- 5 years	179	64%	86	67%	265	65%
6 – 10 years	58	21%	21	16%	79	19%
10 – 20 years	30	11%	10	8%	40	10%
< 20 years	2	1%	2	2%	4	1%

Whereas the majority of the school counselors in the sample reported membership in at least one professional counseling organization (68.7%), most school counselors did not have licensure or certification other than their licensure as a school counselor in North Carolina (68%). The most common organizations listed included North Carolina School Counseling Association (21%), the American Counseling Association (18%), and the American School Counselor Association (14%). The most common licensures/ certifications reported included Nationally Certified Counselor (12%), Licensed Professional Counselor in North Carolina (8%), and Nationally Certified Teacher (6%). Half of those sampled had taught before becoming school counselors, although half had not. Of those who had taught, 10.6% had done so for only one year, 16.8% taught from

two to four years, 15.9% taught five to nine years, 5.2% taught ten to fourteen years, and only 1.4% had taught fifteen or more years. Time spent teaching prior to becoming a school counselor ranged from one to 24 years.

Participant Schools and Students

Of the 414 surveys received, 284 responses (69%) were sent from non-rural school counselors and 128 (31%) were completed by their rural counterparts. The non-rural surveys were sent from school locales in the following percentages: 23% were from small towns, 22% were from mid-sized cities, 16% were from large cities, 13% were from urban fringes of large cities, 13% were from urban fringes of mid-sized cities, and 12% of the surveys came from large towns. See Tables 7 and 8 for an explanation of these terms. Of the remaining surveys returned, 51% were from rural areas outside consolidated statistical areas and 49% were from inside these rural areas. (See Tables 9 and 10 for more extensive data tabulation.)

The mean student enrollment in the schools represented by the participants was 737.85 students (*SD* = 278.45), and the reported student body at participants' schools ranged from 47 to 1800 students. The majority of schools had enrollments of between 501 and 1000 students (60%). An equal percentage of schools had between 200 to 500 students or over 1000 students (19% each), and the lowest number of schools had less than 200 students (3%). School counselors reported the percentage of minority students within their schools. It was most common for the percentage of minority students to be from 20 to 50% of the population (37%) or less than 20% of the total student body (34%). It was more common for minority enrollment to be from 51 to 80% (23% of the schools)

than it was for minorities to make up more than 80% of the population (5%). In almost half of the schools, 20 to 50% of the students were reported to receive free or reduced-price lunch (49%). Twenty-eight percent of the respondents reported 51 to 80% of the students were recipients, whereas 16% reported less than 20% students qualified. Only 5% of the respondents reported that over 80% of their students were receiving free/reduced price lunch.

Hypothesis One

Hypothesis one predicted that the Climate of School Support Scale (CSSS) represents one factor—that of school climate—for this sample of middle school counselors. As the CSSS was designed specifically for use in this study, the psychometric properties of the 8-item instrument are reported in this section, including the results of factor analysis and reliability analysis.

School Climate

Descriptive statistics for the 414 participants who completed the CSSS are reported in Appendix C, Item 1. This information includes item minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation. The possible range for each item was 1 to 4.

The descriptive statistics show that item responses ranged from 1 (never) to 4 (usually/always) for six of the 8 items. Items that did not receive responses over the entire range included items 1 (principals) and 6 (students). These items ranged from 2 (sometimes) to 4 (usually/always). Item means ranged from a low of 2.81 for item 7 “school superintendent(s),” to a high of 3.45 for item 1 “principals.”

Table 7

School Locale Code and Definition

Designation	School Code	Locale Type	Definition
NON-RURAL	1	Large City	A central city of a Consolidated Statistical Area (CSA) or Core Based Statistical Area (CBSA) with a population > 249,999
	2	Mid-Size City	A central city of a CSA or CSBA with a population of less than 250,000 individuals within its limits
	3	Urban Fringe of Large City	Any incorporated place, Census Designated Place (CDP), or territory within a CSA or CSBA of a Large City and defined as urban by the Census Bureau (CB)
	4	Urban Fringe of Mid-Size City	Any incorporated place, CDP, or territory within a CSA or CSBA of a Mid-Size City and defined as urban by the CB
	5	Large Town	An incorporated place or CDP with a population > 24,999 and located outside a CSA or CSBA
	6	Small Town	An incorporated place or CDP with population between 2,500 and 25,000 and located outside a CSA or CSBA
RURAL	7	Rural, Outside CSA	Any incorporated place, CDP, or territory not within a CSBA or CSA of a Large or Mid-Size City and defined as rural by the CB
	8	Rural, Inside CSA	Any incorporated place, CDP, or territory within a CSBA or CSA of a Large or Mid-Size City and defined as rural by the CB

Table 8

Definitions of Statistical Terms

CSA:	Consolidated Statistical Area is synonymous with "metropolitan area."
CBSA:	Core Based Statistical Area represents an urban area of 10,000 people or more.
CDP:	Census-designated place (CDP) is a community that lacks a municipal government but resembles a city or village.

Table 9

Demographic Data of Study Participants' Schools

Demographic	Non-Rural		Rural		Total	
Variable	*n*	%	*n*	%	*N*	%
Total	283	69%	128	31%	411	100%

Demographic	Non-Rural		Rural		Total	
Student Enrollment						
< 200	6	2%	4	3%	10	3%
201 – 500	41	15%	35	27%	76	19%
501 – 1000	180	65%	62	48%	241	60%
> 1000	52	19%	27	21%	79	19%
Minority Students						
< 20%	79	29%	58	47%	137	34%
20 – 50%	107	39%	42	34%	149	37%
51 – 80%	74	27%	19	15%	93	23%
> 80%	17	6%	4	3%	21	5%
Free Lunch %						
< 20%	42	16%	17	15%	59	16%
20 – 50%	128	49%	58	50%	186	49%
51 – 80%	70	27%	35	30%	105	28%
> 80%	20	8%	7	6%	27	7%

Table 10

School Locale Codes

Participant School Locale Code:	Non-Rural		Total
	n	%	%
Large City	45	16%	11%
Mid-Size City	63	22%	15%
Urban Fringe of Large City	36	13%	9%
Urban Fringe of Mid-Size City	38	13%	9%
Large Town	35	12%	9%
Small Town	65	23%	16%
Total	284	100%	69%

Participant School Locale Code:	Rural Schools		Total
	n	%	%
Rural, outside CSA*	63	49%	16%
Rural, inside CSA	65	51%	17%
Total	128	100%	31%

* Consolidated Statistical Area

A factor analysis of the 8 items included in the CSS was computed. Results indicated that two scales could be extracted from the 8 items as opposed to the one factor hypothesized in the pilot study. Results of the factor analysis that are reported include total variance explained (Table 11), a scree plot (Figure 4), and a factor matrix (Table 12). Only one of the scales identified in the factor analysis represents items that measure school climate as expressed in relation to those in which school counselors might consult. Seven of the items fit this scale (1-5, 7, and 8). The remaining item (6) represents relational climate with student clients. As a result of this factor analysis, item 6 was excluded from the CSSS.

A reliability analysis of the seven items included in the final version of the CSSS was conducted to assess internal item consistency by utilizing Cronbach's alpha. The resulting analysis indicated a total CSSS scale internal consistency of .86. (See Table 13.) Therefore, the results of the factor analysis of the data indicate that each of these seven items included in the climate factor may be retained and that the CSSS provides a valid and reliable measure for use in the study. Thus, hypothesis one was confirmed as true. Additional information on the descriptive statistics follow.

Table 11

Total Variance Explained for CSSS

(*N* = 414)

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues Loadings			Extraction Sums of Squares		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.06	50.71	50.71	4.05	50.71	50.71
2	1.05	13.22	63.23	1.06	13.22	63.03
3	.75	9.42	73.35			
4	.67	8.36	81.71			
5	.47	5.87	87.58			
6	.46	5.79	93.38			
7	.35	4.42	97.80			
8	.18	2.19	100.00			

Converged after 11 iterations.

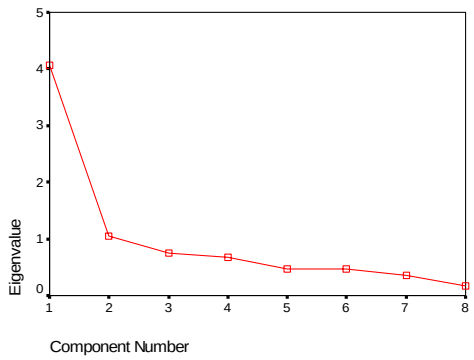


Figure 4. Scree plot for Climate of School Support Scale (*N* = 414).

Table 12

Factor Matrix for CSSS

Item		Factor 1	Factor 2
1	Principal(s)	**.77***	.35
2	Teachers	**.83***	.30
3	Student support services staff	**.71***	.11
4	School staff such as secretaries, custodians, etc.	**.68***	.10
5	Parents	**.65***	.54
6	Students	.32	**.70***
7	School superintendent(s)	**.66***	.15
8	Members of your school community in general	**.83***	.18

* Item selected for factor. (*N* = 414). Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

A histogram of school climate scores is shown in Figure 5. The graph indicates that the distribution is normal but positively skewed. Mean scores for 37% of the participants fell within the range of a highly supportive climate, 56% within the range of a moderately supportive climate, and 7% of the mean scores fell within the range of low school climate of support. (See Figure 6 and Tables 15 and 16.) The results indicate that while participants chose a wide range of responses, the vast majority of participants indicated that they had a moderate climate of support pertaining to their role as school counselor.

Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis two predicted that the Role Questionnaire represents two factors—those of role conflict and role ambiguity—for the sample of middle school counselors. The psychometric properties of the 14-item Role Questionnaire (RQ) are reported in this section, including the results of factor analysis and reliability analysis.

Table 13

Reliability Analysis for CSSS

Overall Alpha = .8565

Item		Item Mean	Item Standard Deviation	Test item Correlation	Alpha if item Deleted
1	Principal(s)	3.45	.67	.65	.83
2	Teachers	2.94	.74	.72	.83
3	Student support services	3.37	.71	.60	.84
4	School staff	3.35	.73	.57	.84
5	Parents	2.93	.74	.55	.85
6	Students	3.21	.66	.42	**.86***
7	School superintendent(s)	3.20	.85	.55	.85
8	school community in general	2.81	.76	.74	.82

* Indicates item deleted. (N = 414)

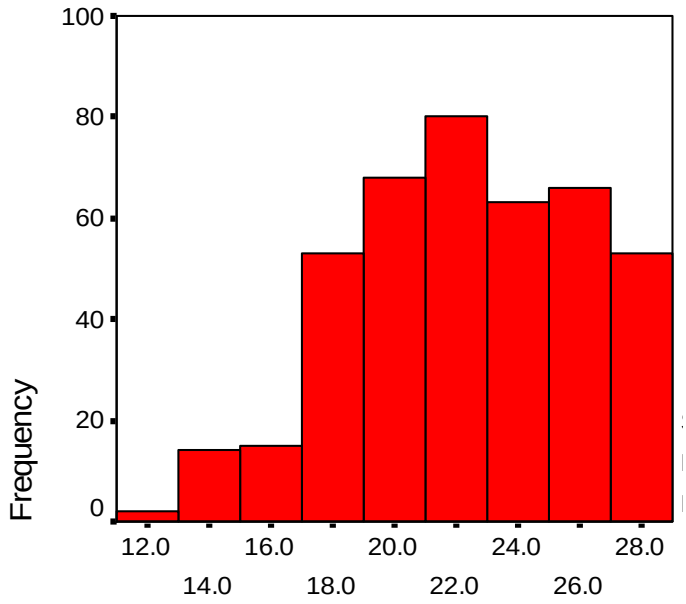


Figure 5. Histogram of total school climate of support scores (*N* = 414).

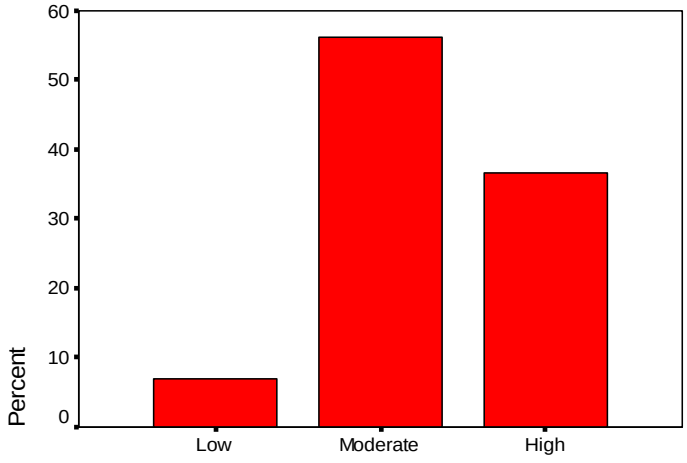


Figure 6. Bar graph of school climate mean rankings (*N* = 414).

Table 14

Descriptive Statistics for Survey Scales (N = 414)

Scale	Reliability	Factor	Min.	Max.	Mean	*SD*	Interpretation
CSSS	.86	School climate	12	28	21.89	3.83	Moderate
RQ	.85	Role conflict	7	47	24.69	8.98	Moderate
RQ	.86	Role ambiguity	5	35	17.59	6.91	Moderate
GESS	.84	Self-efficacy	-2	27	12.76	8.91	Moderate
MDSS	.87	Social support	8	27	20.52	4.37	High
SPSI	.81	Behaviors	8	40	12.93	5.23	High
MBI-HSS	.91	Exhaustion	0	51	22.96	10.95	Moderate
MBI-HSS	.70	Depersonalization	0	22	4.83	4.41	Low
MBI-HSS	.73	Accomplishment	24	48	40.10	5.15	Low

Note: Min. means Minimum, Max. means Maximum, and *SD* is the Standard Deviation.

The descriptive statistics show that item responses ranged from 1 (very true) to 7 (very untrue) for all of the 14 items. Item means ranged from a low of 2.65 for item 1, “I have to do things that should be done differently,” to a high of 4.44 for item 6, “I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out a policy.” See Appendix C, Item 2.

Table 15

Factor Interpretation Specifications for Mean Scores

Survey Scale	Factor	Score Range	Number of Items	Interpretation of Score Low	Moderate	High
CSSS	School climate	7 to 49	7	< 17	17 to 23	> 23
RQ	Role conflict	7 to 49	7	> 34	22 to 34	< 22
RQ	Role ambiguity	5 to 35	5	< 15	15 to 25	> 25
GESS	Self-efficacy	-9 to 27	9	< 4	4 to 14	> 14
MDSS	Social support	7 to 29	7	< 16	16 to 20	> 20
SPSI	Behavioral P-S	8 to 40	8	> 28	20 to 28	< 20
MBI	Emo. exhaustion	0 to 54	9	< 17	17 to 26	> 26
MBI	Depersonalization	0 to 30	5	< 7	7 to 12	> 12
MBI	Personal accomp.	0 to 48	8	> 38	32 to 38	< 32

A factor analysis of the 14 items included in the RQ was computed. The results indicated that three scales rather than two could be extracted from the 14 items, as formerly found by Freeman and Coll (1997) in their investigation of high school counselors. The scales identified in the factor analysis represent items that measure role conflict and role ambiguity as specified by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970) and in other studies (e.g., Schuler, Aldag, & Brief, 1977). The third scale seems to

Table 16

Total Variance Explained for the Role Questionnaire

Principal Component Analysis (N = 414)

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
Factor	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.49	39.18	39.18	5.49	39.18	39.18
2	1.82	13.00	52.18	1.82	13.00	52.18
3	1.38	9.87	62.06	1.38	9.88	62.06
4	0.82	5.82	67.88			
5	0.74	5.26	73.14			
6	0.63	4.50	77.64			
7	0.53	3.77	81.40			
8	0.52	3.72	85.13			
9	0.43	3.08	88.21			
10	0.41	2.90	91.11			
11	0.39	2.78	93.88			
12	0.34	2.45	96.33			
13	0.26	1.87	98.20			
14	0.25	1.80	100.00			

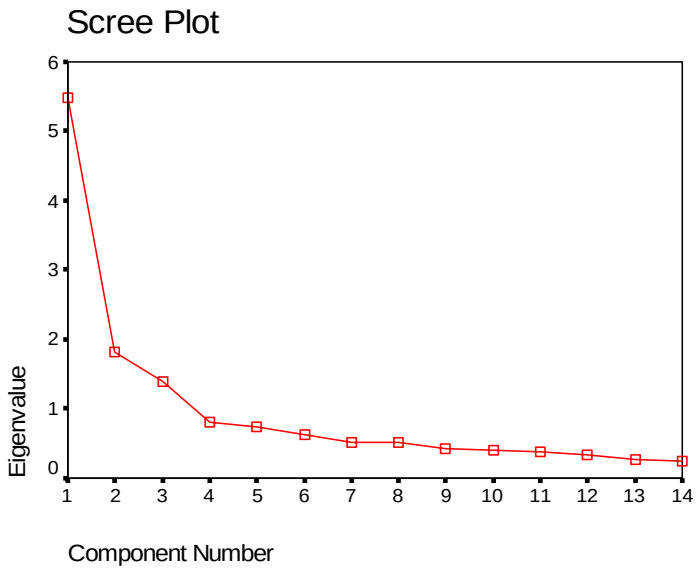


Figure 7. Scree plot for Role Questionnaire (*N* = 414).

represent items having to do with work overload. Thus, item 5 was left out of the Role Conflict factor and item 12 was left out of the Role Ambiguity factor. Results of the factor analysis reported include total variance explained (Table 16), a scree plot (Figure 7), and a factor matrix (Table 17).

A reliability analysis of the 7 items included in the final version of the RQ-RC was conducted to assess internal item consistency by utilizing Cronbach's alpha. The resulting analysis indicates a total RQ-RC scale internal consistency of .84. (See Table 18.) Thus, the results of the factor analysis of the data indicate that each of these seven

items included in the role conflict factor may be retained and that the RQ provides a valid and reliable measure for use in the study.

Table 17

Factor Matrix for Role Questionnaire

Item	Factor RC 1	RA 2	WO 3
1. I have to do things that should be done differently.	**.53***	.24	.17
2. I have to work on unnecessary things.	**.64***	.34	.21
3. I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it.	**.69***	.30	.28
4. I receive an assignment without proper human power to complete it.	**.67***	.38	.29
5. I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently.	.23	.18	**.45***
6. I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment.	**.63***	.31	.37
7. I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.	**.65***	.24	.35

* Item selected. (N = 414). Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

	Factor		
	RC	RA	WO
Item	1	2	3
8. I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not by others.	**.61***	.22	.35
9. I know exactly what is expected of me.	.10	**.46***	.10
10. I feel certain about how much authority I have.	.21	**.40***	.02
11. Clear, planned goals exist for my job.	.10	**.31***	.01
12. I know that I have divided my time properly.	.17	.13	**.38***
13. I know what my responsibilities are.	.17	**.47***	.13
14. Clear explanations are given for what must be done.	.11	**.40***	.01

* Item selected for factor. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in five iterations.

A reliability analysis of the 5 items included in the final version of the Role Questionnaire-Role Ambiguity (RQ-RA) scale was conducted to assess internal item consistency by utilizing Cronbach's alpha. The resulting analysis indicates a total RQ-RA scale internal consistency of .86. (See Table 19.) Thus, the results of the factor

Table 18

Reliability Analysis for Role Questionnaire (Role Conflict)

Overall Alpha = **.8473**

Item	Item Mean	Item *SD*	Test item Correlation	Alpha if item Deleted
1. I have to do things that should be done differently.	2.65	1.67	.52	.82
2. I have to work on unnecessary things.	3.01	1.77	.57	.82
3. I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it.	3.62	1.78	.68	.80
4. I receive an assignment without proper human power to complete it.	3.52	1.86	.62	.81
6. I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment.	4.44	1.90	.60	.81
7. I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.	4.00	1.79	.61	.81
8. I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not by others.	3.45	1.76	.56	.82

Table 19

Reliability Analysis for Role Questionnaire (Role Ambiguity)

Overall Alpha = **.8588**

Item	Item Mean	Item *SD*	Test item Correlation	Alpha if item Deleted
9. I know exactly what is expected of me.	3.30	1.69	.731	.81
10. I feel certain about how much authority I have.	3.60	1.85	.60	.83
11. Clear, planned goals exist for my job.	3.94	1.80	.65	.82
13. I know what my responsibilities are.	2.83	1.57	.71	.81
14. Clear explanations are given for what is done.	3.93	1.69	.70	.81

analysis of the data indicate that each of the five items included in the role ambiguity factor may be retained and that the RQ-RA provides a valid and reliable measure for use in the study. Thus, hypothesis two is met. Descriptive statistics for the two scales of the RQ follow.

A histogram of total role conflict scores is shown in Figure 9. The graph indicates the distribution is relatively normal. Mean scores for 40% of the participants fell within the range of a highly conflicted role, 44% within the range of a moderately conflicted role, and 16% of the mean scores fell within the range of low role conflict. (See Figure

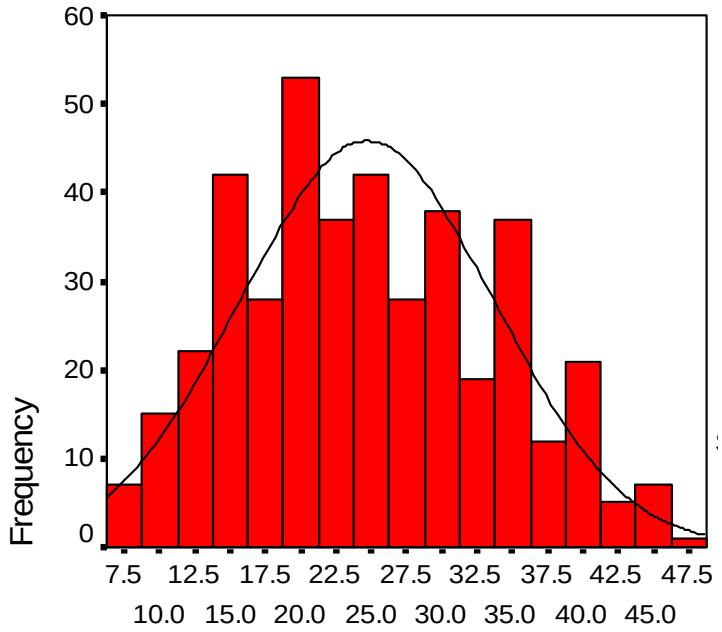


Figure 8. Histogram of role conflict scores (*N* = 414).

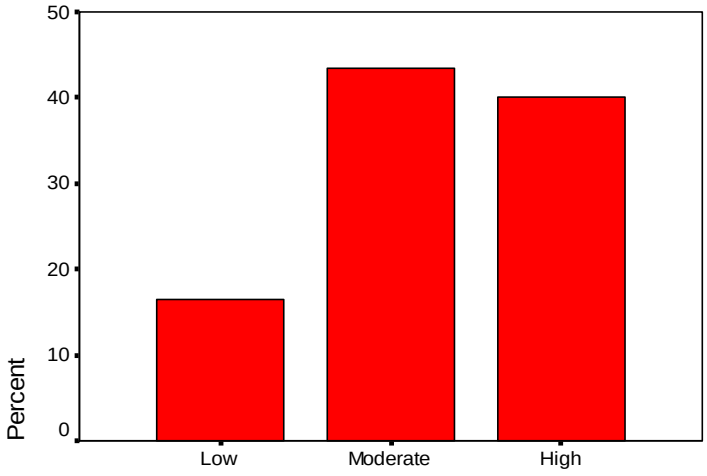


Figure 9. Bar graph of role conflict mean rankings (*N* = 414).

10.) The results indicate that while participants chose a wide range of responses, the majority of participants in this study indicated that their perception of their role conflict was moderate to high.

A histogram of total role ambiguity scores is shown in Figure 10. The graph indicates a normal distribution of scores that is slightly negatively skewed. Mean scores for 12% of the participants fell within the range of a highly ambiguous roles, 50% within the range of a moderately ambiguous roles, and 39% of the mean scores fell within the range of low role ambiguity. (See Figure 11.) The results indicate that while participants chose a wide range of responses, the majority of participants in this study indicated that they experience a moderate amount of role ambiguity in their middle school counseling positions.

Hypothesis Three

Hypothesis three predicted that the mean scores of non-rural and rural counselors would differ for each of the seven variables. Before discussing the statistical processes by which this hypothesis was answered, it was necessary to establish the psychometric properties of the other instruments utilized in the study.

Additional variables measured as a part of the study included school counselor self-efficacy, social support, and behavioral problem-solving, as well as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (the factors hypothesized to make up burnout). Descriptive data for the remaining assessments used are found in Appendix C (items 3 through 6) and Figures 12 through 23.

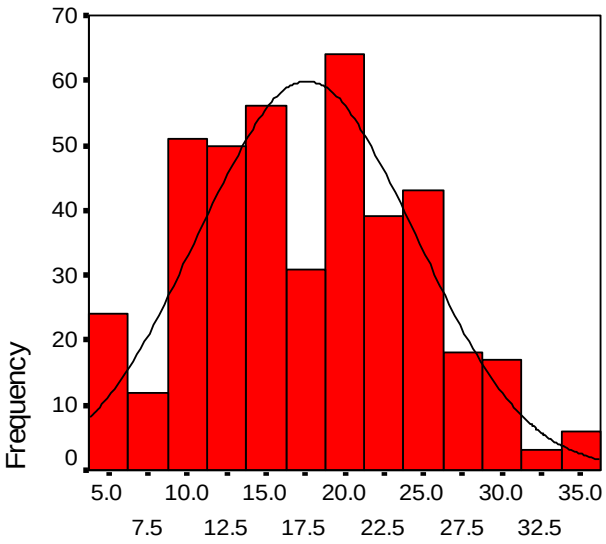


Figure 10. Histogram of role ambiguity scores (*N* = 414).

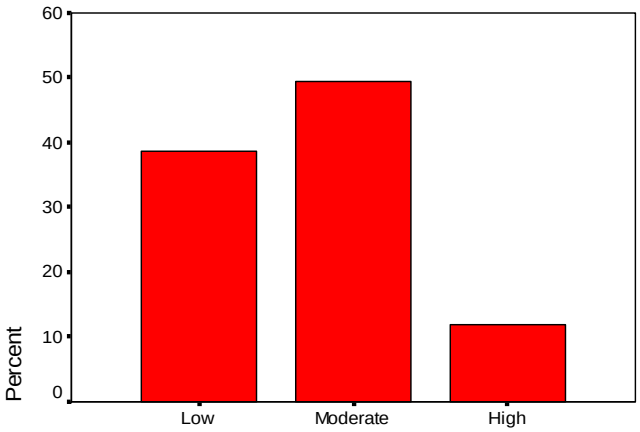


Figure 11. Bar graph of role ambiguity mean rankings (*N* = 414).

Self-Efficacy

Data were collected to measure self-efficacy, as measured by the Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale (GESS). Descriptive statistics for the 411 participants who completed the GESS are reported in Appendix C, Item 3. This information includes item minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation. The possible range for each item was 1 to 5.

The descriptive statistics indicate that item responses ranged from 1 (highly improbable) to 5 (highly probable) for six of the 10 items. Items that did not receive responses over the entire range included items 3, 6, 8, and 10. Items 3, 6, and 10 ranged from 2 (improbable) to 5 (highly probable). Responses for item 8 ranged from 3 (neutral) to 5 (highly probable). Item means ranged from a low of 2.71 for item 2, "In the future I expect that I will not be very good at learning new skills," to a high of 4.40 for item 8, "In the future I expect that I will be listened to when I speak." A reliability analysis of the 10 items from the GESS used to determine self-efficacy was conducted using Cronbach's alpha. The resulting analysis indicates a total GESS scale internal consistency of .8415.

A histogram of total self-efficacy scores is shown in Figure 12. The graph indicates a bimodal distribution. More analysis of the data revealed through ANOVA that there was a statistically significant difference (alpha 0.01) for school counselors of different genders. Men had a significantly lower self-efficacy mean (10.23, *SD* = 8.34), that did women (13.38, *SD* = 8.92). Mean scores for 42% of the participants fell within the high range of self-efficacy, 32% within the range of moderate levels, and 26% of the

mean scores fell within the low range of depersonalization. (See Figure 13.) The results indicate that while participants chose a wide range of responses, the majority of participants in this study indicated that their perception of their self-efficacy was moderate to high.

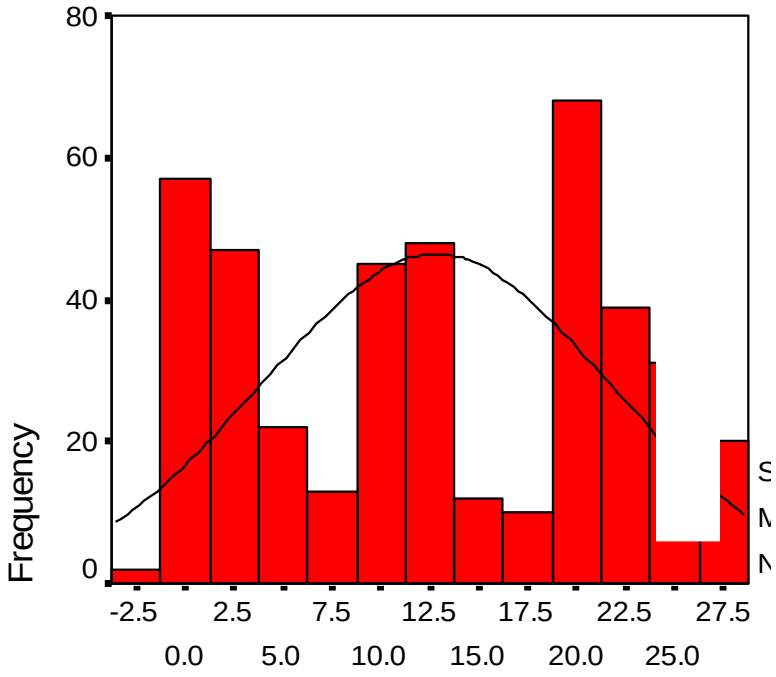


Figure 12. Histogram of total self-efficacy scores (N = 414).

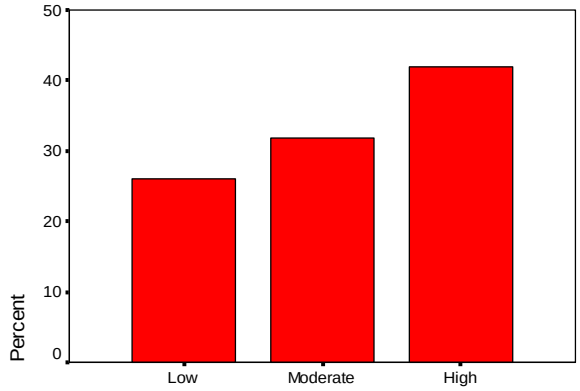


Figure 13. Bar graph of self-efficacy mean rankings (*N* = 414).

Social Support

Data were collected to measure support from school counselors' family and friends, as measured by the Multidimensional Support Scale (MDSS). Descriptive statistics for the 414 participants who completed the MDSS are reported in Appendix C, Item 4. This information includes item minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation. The possible range for each item was 1 to 4, except for item 4, which had a possible range of 1 to 3.

The descriptive statistics indicate that item responses ranged from 1 (never) to 4 (usually/always) for 6 items. Item means ranged from a low of 2.63 for item 7, "How often could you use them as examples of how to deal with your problems?," to a high of 3.41 for item 3, "How often did they really make you feel loved?." For the final item, item 4, responses ranged from 1 (more often) to 3 (just right). The mean score of this item was 2.41. A reliability analysis of the 7 items from the MDSS used to determine social support was conducted using

Cronbach's alpha. The resulting analysis indicates a total MDSS scale internal consistency of .8693.

A histogram of total social support scores is shown in Figure 14. The graph indicates a positively skewed distribution. Mean scores for 58% of the participants fell within the high range of social support, 27% within the range of moderate levels, and 16% of the mean scores fell within the range of low social support. (See Figure 15.) The results indicate that while participants chose a wide range of responses, the majority

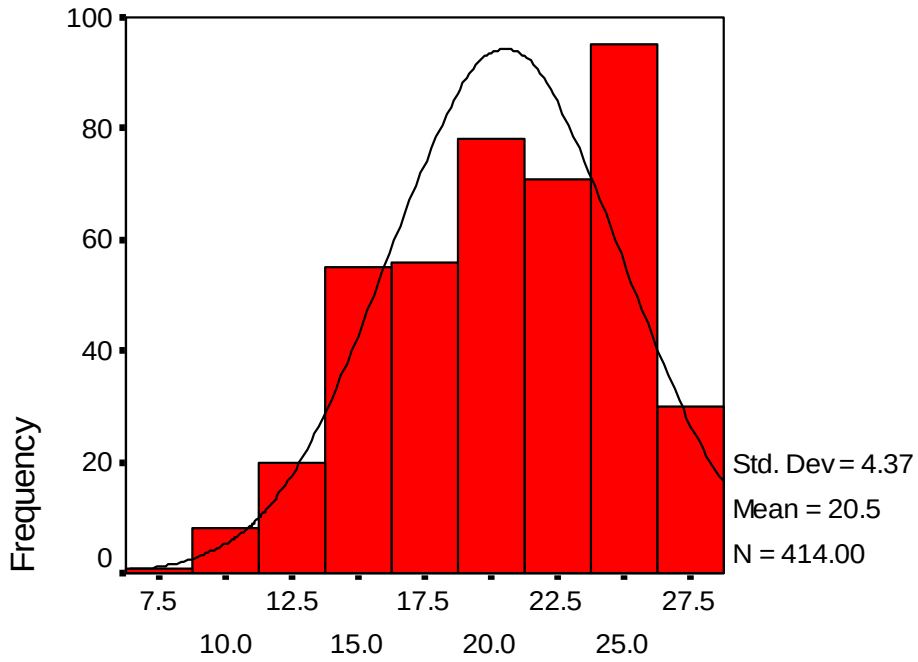


Figure 14. Histogram of total social support scores (*N* = 414).

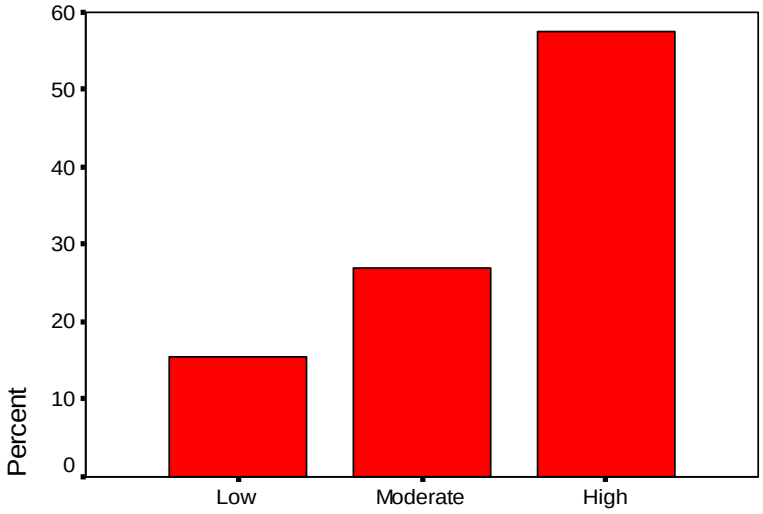


Figure 15. Bar graph of social support mean rankings (*N* = 414).

of participants in this study indicated that their perception of their social support from family and friends was high.

Behavioral Problem-Solving

Finally, data were collected to measure the degree to which school counselors utilized behavioral problem-solving in their professional role, as measured by the Social Problem-Solving Inventory (SPSI). Descriptive statistics for the 414 participants who completed the SPSI are reported in Appendix C, Item 5. This information includes item minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation. The possible range for each item was 1 to 5.

The descriptive statistics indicate that item responses ranged from 1 (not true) to 5 (very true) for all of the 10 items. Item means ranged from a low of 1.58 for item 9, "When I am faced with a difficult problem, I usually try to avoid the problem or I go to

someone else for help in solving it.," to a high of 3.11 for item 5, "I usually confront my problems "head on," instead of trying to avoid them."

A reliability analysis of the 10 items from the SPSI used to determine the level of behavior problem-solving was conducted using Cronbach's alpha. The resulting analysis indicates a total SPSI scale internal consistency of .7865. However, by omitting item 1, "I spend too much time worrying about my problems instead of trying to solve them," the alpha increased to .8104.

A histogram of total behavioral problem-solving scores is shown in Figure 16. The graph indicates a negatively skewed distribution. Mean scores for 89% of the participants fell within the high range of behavioral problem solving, 8% within the range of moderate levels, and 3% of the mean scores fell within the range of low behavioral problem-solving. (See Figure 17.) The results indicate that the majority of participants in this study indicated that their perception of their behavioral problem-solving was high.

Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional Exhaustion was assessed using the Emotional Exhaustion subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS). The descriptive statistics show that item responses ranged from 0 (never) to 6 (every day) for all of the Emotional Exhaustion scale items. Item means for this scale ranged from a low of 1.27 for item 16, "Working with people directly puts too much stress on me," to a high of 3.44 for item 1, "I feel emotionally drained from my work." See Appendix C, Item 6 for more information. A reliability analysis of the nine items included in the scale was conducted

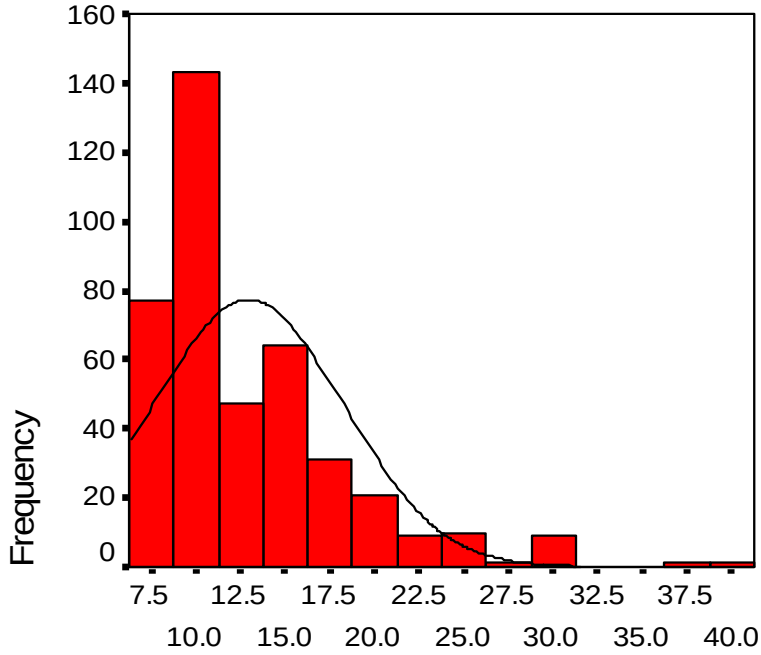


Figure 16. Histogram of total behavioral problem-solving scores (*N* = 414).

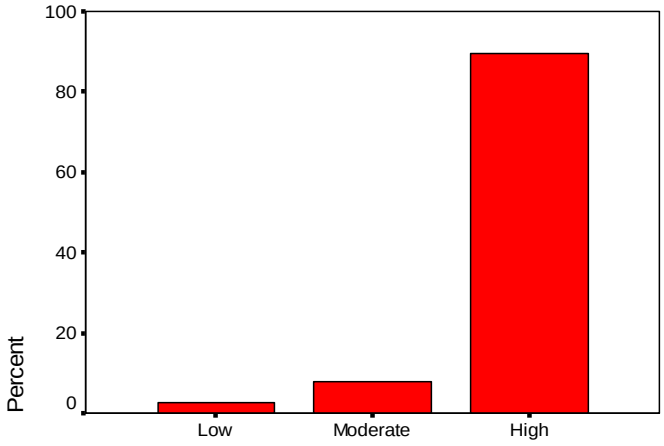


Figure 17. Bar graph of behavioral problem-solving mean rakings (*N* = 414).

to assess internal item consistency by utilizing Cronbach's alpha. The resulting analysis indicates a total Emotional Exhaustion scale internal consistency of .9067.

A histogram of Emotional Exhaustion scores is shown in Figure 18. The graph indicates the distribution is normal. Mean scores fell in the high range of emotional exhaustion for 41% of the respondents; however, 34.5% of the respondents' mean scores fell in the low range, and the mean scores of 24.6% fell within the moderate range. (See Figure 19.) The results indicate that while participants chose a wide range of responses, the majority of participants in this study reported a high degree of emotional exhaustion within the role of middle school counselor.

Depersonalization

The descriptive statistics indicate that item responses for the Depersonalization subscale of the MBI-HSS ranged from 0 (never) to 6 (every day) for all but one of the items. Item 5, "I feel I treat some recipients as if they were impersonal objects," ranged from 0 (never) to 5 (a few times a week). Item means ranged from a low of 0.84 for item 5, "I feel I treat some recipients as if they were impersonal objects," to a high of 1.38 for item 10, "I've become more callous toward people since I took this job." A reliability analysis of the five items included in the scale was conducted to assess internal item consistency by utilizing Cronbach's alpha. The resulting analysis indicates a total Depersonalization scale internal consistency of .7031.

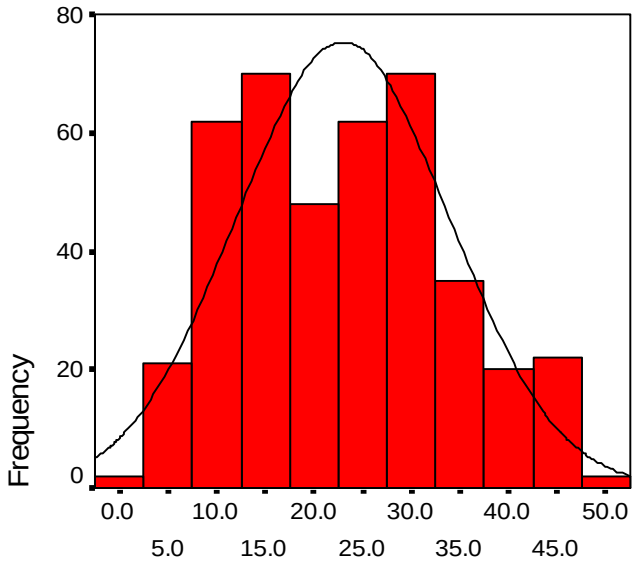


Figure 18. Histogram of emotional exhaustion scores (*N* = 414).

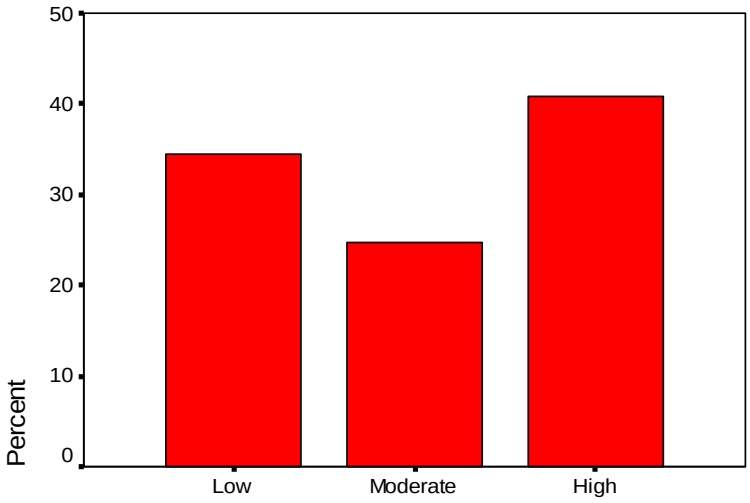


Figure 19. Bar graph of emotional exhaustion mean rankings (*N* = 414).

A histogram of depersonalization scores is shown in Figure 20. The graph indicates that the distribution is normal but negatively skewed. Mean scores for 71.3% of the participants fell within the low range of depersonalization, 22.9% within the range of moderate levels, and 5.5% of the mean scores fell within the range of high

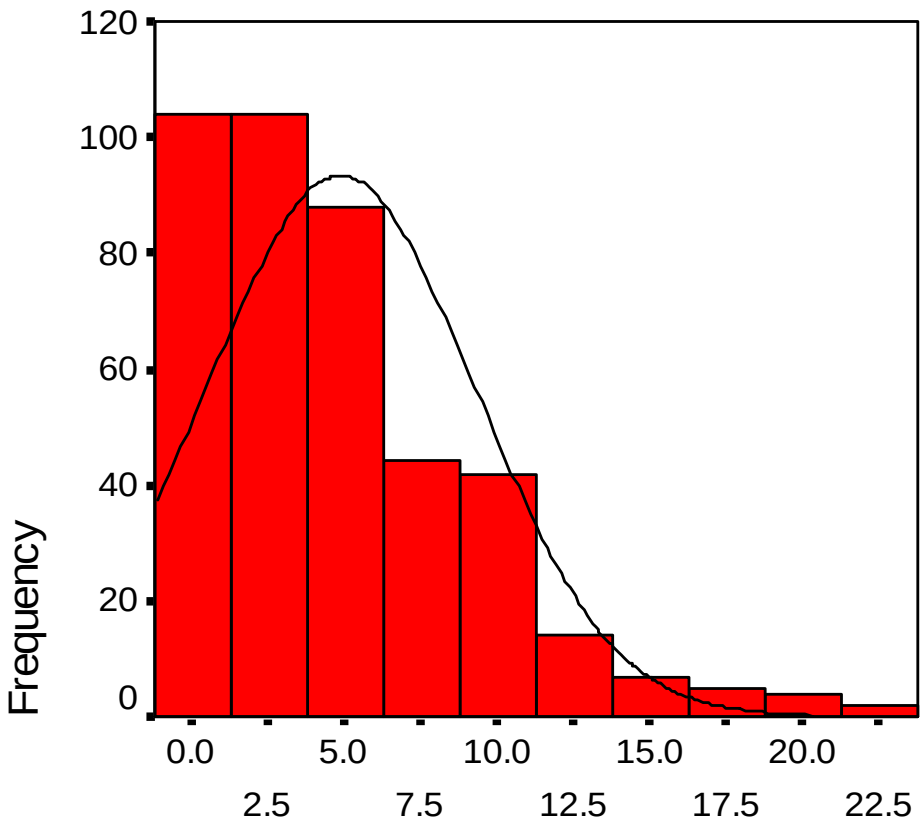


Figure 20. Histogram of depersonalization scores by frequency (*N* = 414).

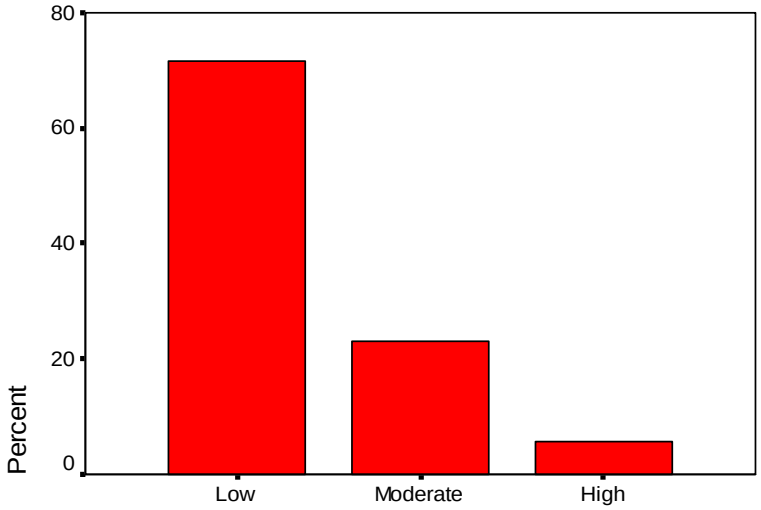


Figure 21. Bar graph of depersonalization mean rankings (*N* = 414).

depersonalization. (See Figure 21.) Results indicate that while participants chose a wide range of responses, the vast majority of participants indicated that they had a low level of depersonalization within the role of middle school counselor.

Personal Accomplishment

The descriptive statistics indicated that item responses for the Personal Accomplishment subscale of the MBI-HSS ranged from 0 (never) to 6 (every day) for all but one of the items. Item 19, "I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job," ranged from 1 (a few times a year or less) to 6 (every day). Item means ranged from a low of 4.29 for item 12, "I feel very energetic," to a high of 5.52 for item 17, "I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my recipients." A reliability analysis of the 8 items included in the MBI-PA was conducted to assess internal item consistency by utilizing

Cronbach's alpha. The resulting analysis indicates a total MBI-HSS scale internal consistency of .7257.

Because the MBI-HSS scoring key requires that the Personal Accomplishment subscale be negatively scored, a low score actually means the individual has a high sense of personal accomplishment. Thus, a more apt name for this subscale would be "Lack of Personal Accomplishment." A histogram of personal accomplishment scores is shown in Figure 22. The graph indicates that the distribution is normal but positively skewed. Mean scores for 66.7% of the participants fell within the low range of personal accomplishment, 27.8% within the range of moderate levels, and 5.3% of the mean scores fell within the range of high personal accomplishment. (See Figure 23.) Again, because the scores are negatively calculated, the results show that while participants

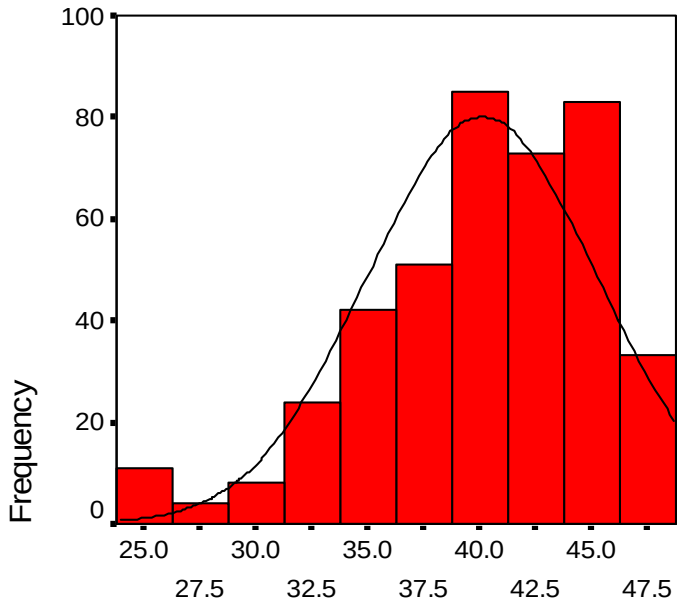


Figure 22. Histogram of personal accomplishment scores (*N* = 414).

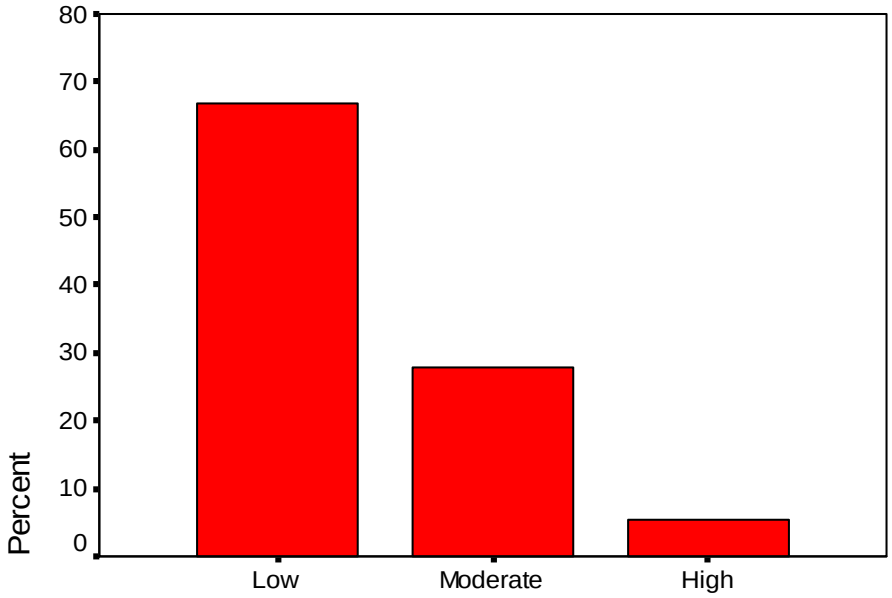


Figure 23. Bar graph of personal accomplishment mean rankings (*N* = 414).

chose a wide range of responses, the vast majority of participants indicated that they had a low level of personal accomplishment (actually, a low level of the lack of personal accomplishment) within the role of middle school counselor.

Hypothesis Three

To answer hypothesis three, Analyses of Variance (ANOVAs) were conducted for each of the mean scores of scales utilized in the survey instrument. Table 20 summarizes the findings. Of the analyses performed, none were statistically significant at the 0.01 alpha level. Thus, hypothesis three was not supported. No statistically significant differences were found between rural and non-rural middle school counselors.

Hypothesis Four

Hypothesis four predicted that rural participants who report a more positive school climate, low role conflict and role ambiguity, high self-esteem, high social support, and high behavioral problem-solving coping resources will indicate different levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment than their non-rural peers.

To test this hypothesis, a correlation matrix was compiled to determine the relationship of the school environment, counselor coping resources, and burnout variables for rural and non-rural participants. Many statistically significant correlations, both positive and negative, were identified. Nineteen correlations were significant at the .00l level for the rural school counselor participants, whereas twenty-one correlations were significant at the same level for non-rural participants. Of these, eleven seemed to have practical significance. See the correlation matrix (Table 21) for specifics. Figures 24 through 29 show the correlations among the variables with reference to the two groups, and figures 30 through 32 indicate the correlations among the variables hypothesized to form underlying constructs for hypotheses six and seven. School environment and burnout variables are significantly correlated with each other for both groups, but the coping resources variables are not. Hypothesis four was supported.

Table 20

Mean Scores and Standard Deviations by Non-Rural and Rural Participants

Factor	NON-RURAL			RURAL			TOTAL		
	Mean	*SD*	Interp.	Mean	*SD*	Interp.	Mean	*SD*	Interp.
School Climate	21.84	3.96	M	22.01	3.53	M	21.89	3.83	M
Role Conflict	24.42	9.18	M	25.53	8.50	M	24.69	8.98	M
Role Ambiguity	17.34	6.81	M	18.15	7.10	M	17.59	6.91	M
Self-Efficacy	13.24	0.02	M	11.70	8.53	M	12.76	8.91	M
Social Support	20.51	4.33	H	20.53	4.52	H	20.52	4.38	H
Behavioral P-S	12.84	4.80	H	12.73	5.51	H	12.81	5.02	H
Emo. Exhaustion	23.36	11.39	M	21.93	9.90	M	22.92	10.96	M
Depersonalization	4.99	4.37	L	4.24	4.00	L	4.75	4.26	L
Personal Accomp.	39.75	5.22	L	41.02	4.84	L	40.15	5.13	L

NOTE: *SD* is the standard deviation and Interp. Refers to the interpretation of whether the score is high (H), moderate (M), or low (L).

Table 21

Correlations of Factors

Variable	Climate	Social Support	Self-Efficacy	Role Conflict	Role Ambig.	Behav. P-S	Emo. Exhaust.	Deper-sonaliz.	(-) Person. Accomp.
Climate	.83 / .87	.66	-.21	-.30*	-.35*	-.13	-.17	-.24*	.36*
Social Support	.18*	.83 / .83	-.54	-.13	-.18	-.12	-.17	-.10	-.01
Self-Efficacy	.29	.02	.76 / .88	-.27*	.13	.05	**.88***	.27*	-.16
Role Conflict	-.5	-.05	-.34*	.80 / .86	.31*	.18*	.36*	.37*	-.35*
Role Ambiguity	**-.55***	-.15	**.40***	**.59***	.86 / .86	.15	.12	.31*	-.18*
Behavioral Problem-Solving	-.01	-.08	-.02	.19*	.04	.83 / .75	.09	**.46***	-.35*
Emotional Exhaustion	-.35*	-.05	**.85***	**.46***	**.41***	.11	.89 / .91	.38*	-.27*
Depersonalization	-.25*	-.09	**.46***	.33*	.20*	.18*	**.53***	.76 / .67	**-.42***
Personal Accomplishment	.23*	.22*	-.06	-.07	-.04	-.25*	-.13*	-.28*	.74 / .72

NON-RURAL SCHOOL COUNSELORS (*n* = 128)

RURAL COUNSELORS (*n* = 283)

NOTE: Separate reliabilities for each subscale are reported along the diagonal line. * Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Correlations in bold are noted for practical significance (above 0.40).

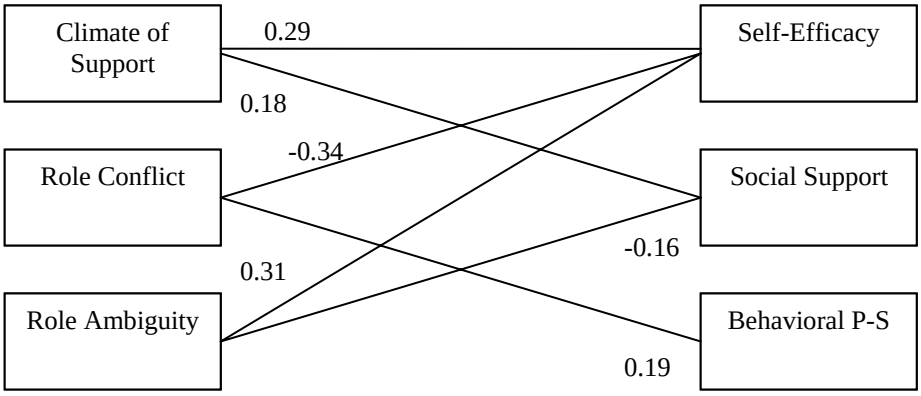


Figure 24. Significant correlations for rural respondents: Environment and coping.

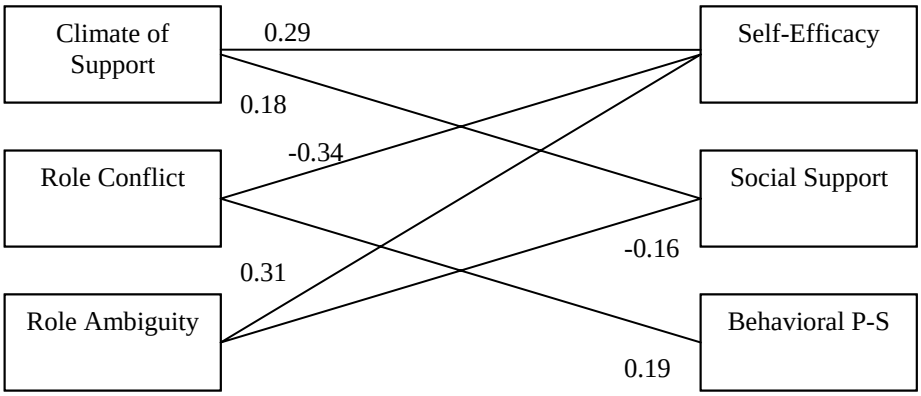


Figure 25. Significant correlations for non-rural subjects: environment and coping.

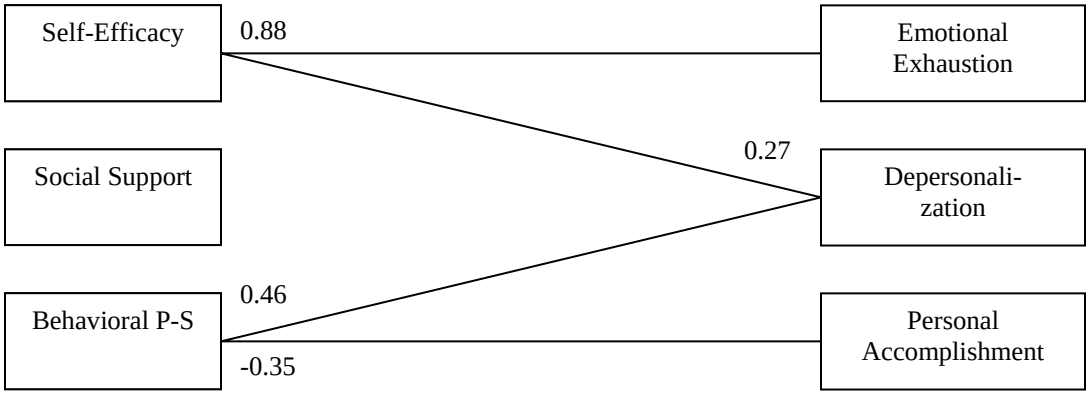


Figure 26. Significant correlations for rural respondents: Coping and burnout.

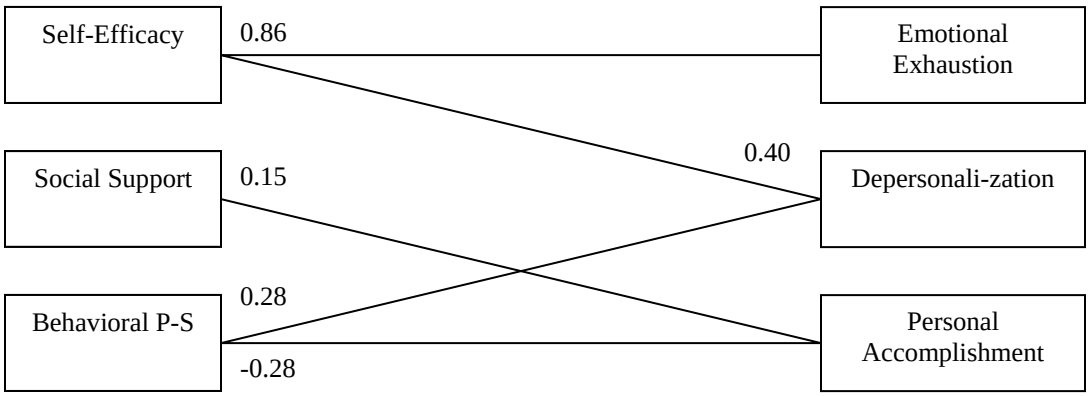


Figure 27. Significant correlations for non-rural subjects: Coping and burnout.

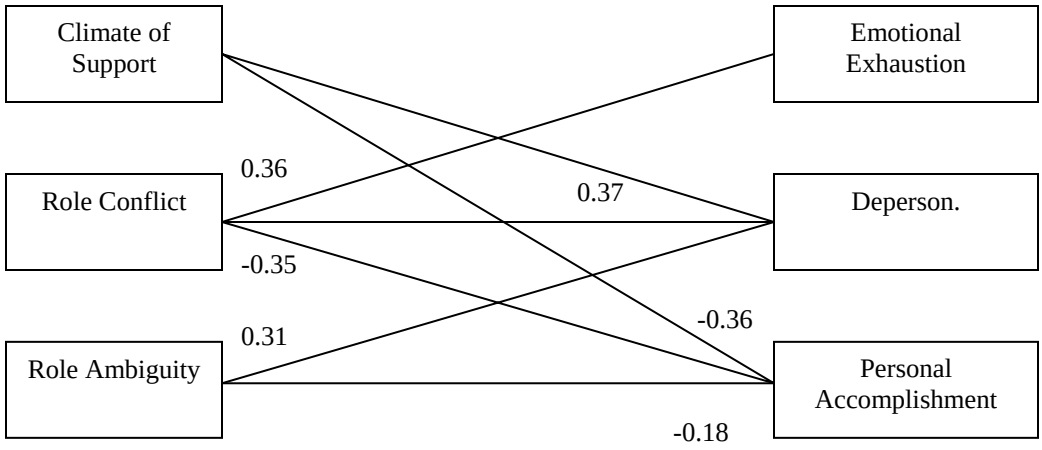


Figure 28. Significant correlations for rural respondents: Environment and burnout.

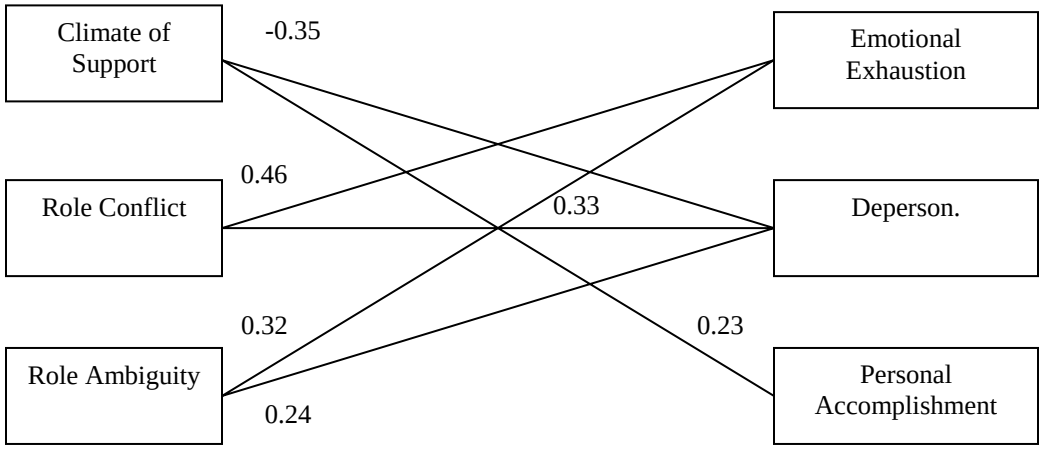


Figure 29. Significant correlations for non-rural subjects: Environment and burnout.

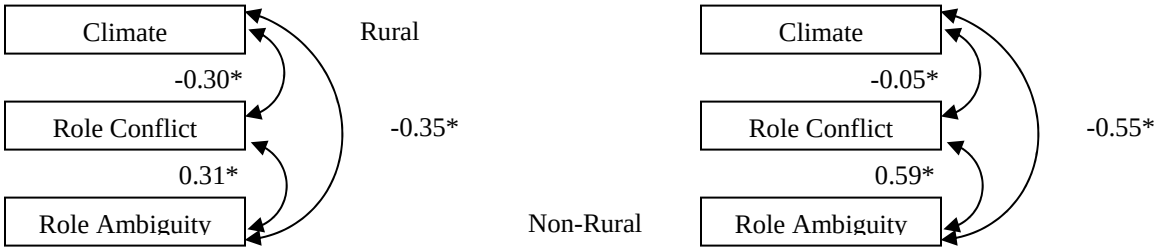


Figure 30. Correlations among factors hypothesized to form school environment.

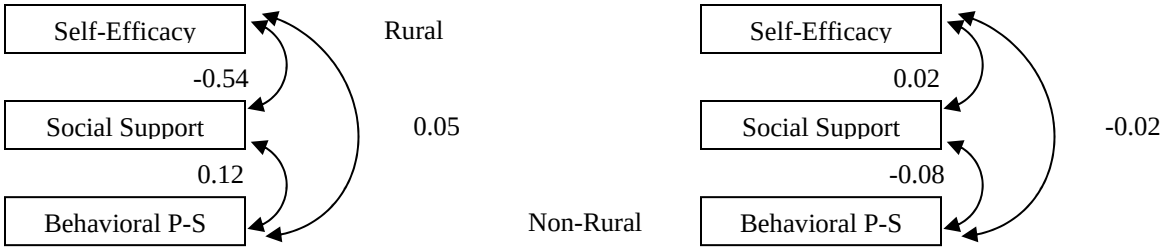


Figure 31. Correlations among factors hypothesized to form coping resources.

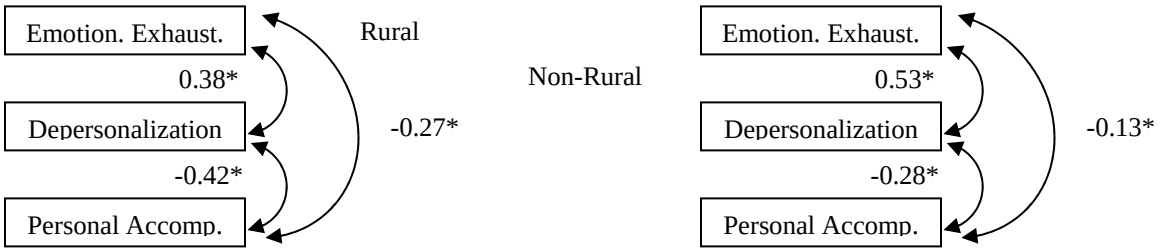


Figure 32. Correlations among factors hypothesized to form burnout.

Hypothesis Five

Hypothesis five predicted that the factors comprising the coping resources construct (self-efficacy, social support, and behavioral problem-solving) moderate the relationship between school environment and burnout factors. According to the methodology proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986), moderation requires that two caveats be met in regard to the variables. First, a significant relationship must exist between the predictor (school environment factors) and the criterion (burnout). Secondly, moderation requires that the interaction of the predictor (school environment factors) and the proposed moderator (coping resource factors) significantly predict the criterion variable (burnout). Based on findings from hypothesis four, there were nine incidences in which both requirements were met (see Table 22).

Hypothesis five was tested by utilizing the multiple regression solution for moderated relationships (Howell, 2002). According to this solution, the data were centered by subtracting each variable's mean from the individual observations. After centering the variables, products of the centered variables were estimated to represent the interaction in an attempt to reduce the correlation between the main effects and the interactions. Finally, the interaction of the two predictor variables was included in a regression with the other centered variables. Based on the information gained from testing of hypothesis four, nine analyses were run ($p = .01$). The results of the regressions are summarized in Appendix C, Items 7 through 9. Only one significant moderating relationship was found: self-efficacy appeared to moderate the relationship between role conflict and emotional exhaustion.

Table 22

Significance of Multiple Regression Determination of Moderating Variables

Predictor	Interaction (Abbreviation)	Significance
Emotional Exhaustion		
	Climate* Self-Efficacy (CL/SE)	N
	Role Conflict*Self-Efficacy (RC/SE)	Y
	Role Ambiguity* Self-Efficacy (RA/SE)	N
Depersonalization		
	Climate*Self-Efficacy (CL/sE)	N
	Role Conflict*Self-Efficacy (RC/SE)	N
	Role Ambiguity* Self-Efficacy (RA/SE)	N
	Role Conflict*Behavioral P-S (RC/BPS)	N
Personal Accomplishment		
	Climate*Social Support (CL/SS)	N
	Role Conflict*Behavioral P-S (RC/BPS)	N

Hypothesis Six

The last two hypotheses (hypotheses six and seven) utilized confirmatory path analyses and structural equation modeling to test the relationships among variables. For these analyses, the LISREL 8.71 (Joreskog & Sorbom, 2004) student software package was utilized.

Figure 33 presents the hypothesized path model for hypothesis six, which predicted that the school environment factors (the school climate of support, role conflict, and role ambiguity felt by the school counselor) directly affect burnout, which is represented by the factors of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. The fit indices for the hypothesized path diagram revealed a significant Chi-square indicating that the model did not fit the data. See Table 23 for a summary of path model results.

In an effort to ascertain a model of better fit, an additional analysis was conducted testing the idea that the construct of school environment might form two constructs: climate and role. It was speculated that the underlying construct of school environment may not represent a distinct construct and that the three factors might differ enough to warrant exclusive constructs (school climate of support justifying a construct called climate, with role conflict and role ambiguity forming a construct called role strain). This analysis resulted in a significant Chi-square and fit indices indicating that the model did not fit the data. A final analysis was performed in which the theoretical construct of burnout (as determined by Maslach, 1982) was altered to omit the personal accomplishment factor. Evidence that the three factors assessed through the MBI does

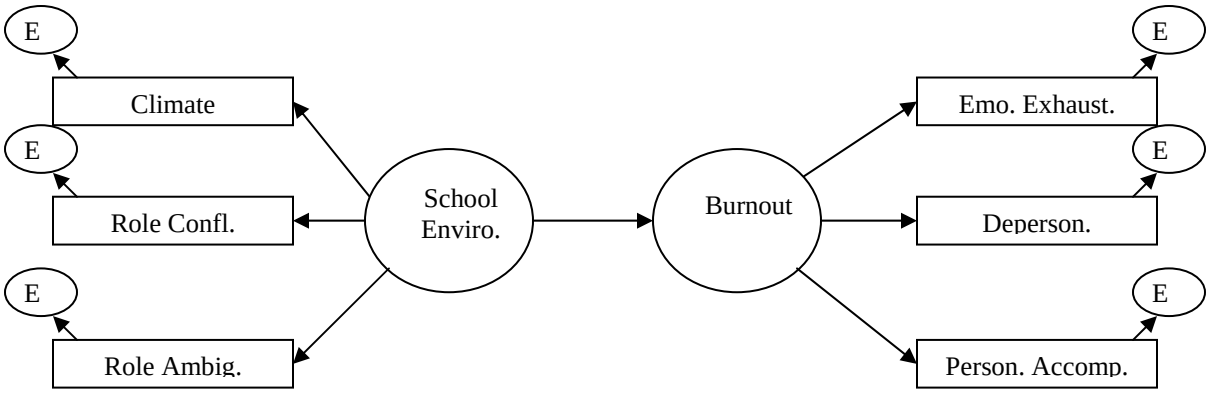


Figure 33. Path diagram of hypothesis six (Model 6.1).

not always form an underlying construct (burnout) has been noted by several researchers and suggested in earlier studies (e.g., Kim, 1993; Lambie, 2002). The resulting path diagram is illustrated in Figure 31. The structural equation path diagram for the model indicates that the model fits the data with an RMSEA of .058, GFI = .99, and AGFI = .96. Thus, hypothesis six was partially supported.

Table 23

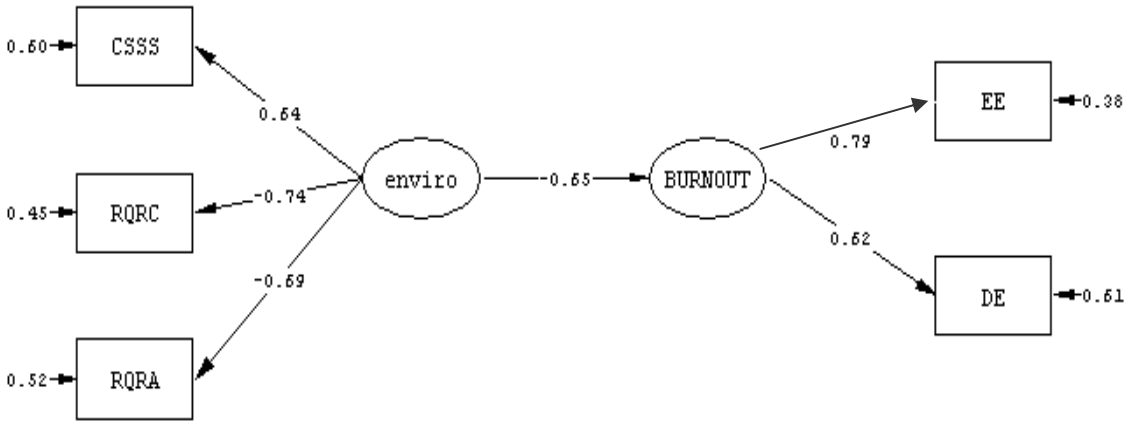
Path Analyses Fit Indices for Hypothesis Six

Model	X^2	*df*	*p*	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA	Interpretation
6.1	44.85	8	<0.01	0.97	0.91	0.95	0.106	Bad fit
6.2	44.58	7	<0.01	0.97	0.90	0.95	0.114	Bad fit
6.3	11.59	4	0.020	0.99	0.96	0.99	0.058	Good fit

NOTE: X^2 is the Normal Theory Weighted Least Squares Chi-Square, *df* represents Degrees of Freedom, GFI is the Goodness-of-Fit Index, AGFI is the Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index, CFI is the Comparative Fit Index, and RMSEA is the Root Mean Square of Approximation.

Hypothesis Seven

Figure 35 presents the hypothesized path modeling of the data for hypothesis seven. The hypothesis predicted that the model would fit equally well for rural and non-rural middle school counselors. However, the return rate for these two groups was insufficient to run the model separately, as at least 200 participants per group were



Chi-Square = 11.69, *d f* = 4, *p*-value = 0.01985, RMSEA = 0.058

NOTE: Chi-Square is the Normal Theory Weighted Least Squares Chi-Square, *df* represents Degrees of Freedom, and RMSEA is the Root Mean Square of Approximation.

Figure 34. Best model fit for hypothesis six (Model 6.3).

required (283 non-rural participants and 183 rural participants returned their surveys). Thus, the model was run for all participants as one group. The fit indices for the hypothesized path diagram revealed a significant Chi-square indicating that the model did not fit the data. See Figure 36 and Table 24 for explanation of results.

Two additional analyses were conducted in an effort to ascertain a model of better fit. First, a model was tested in which the construct of burnout was altered so that the

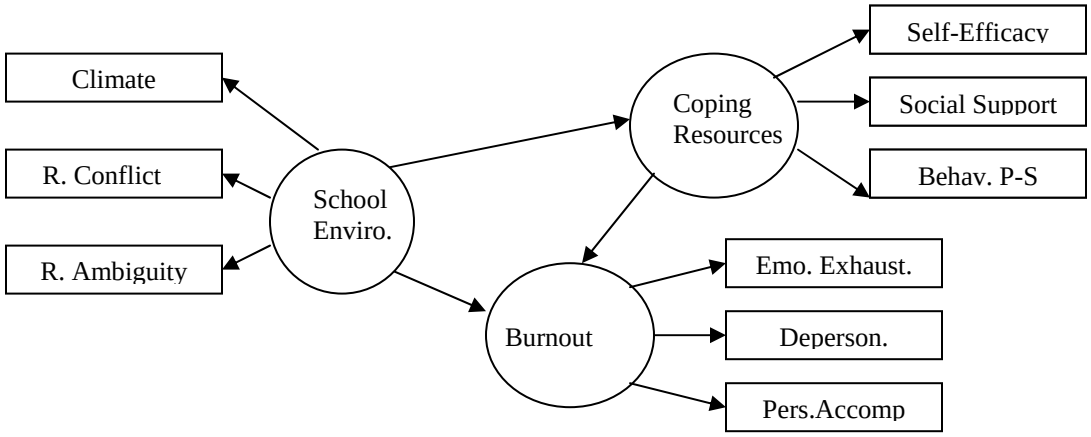
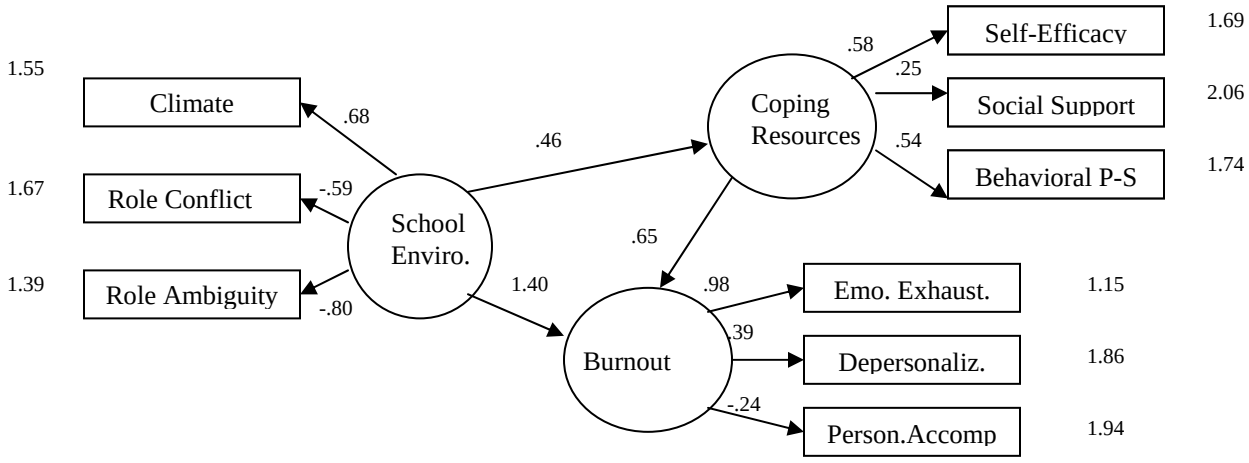


Figure 35. Path diagram for hypothesis seven (Model 7.1).



Chi-Square = 204.04, *df* = 25, *p*-value = 0.0000, RMSEA = 0.1302

NOTE: Chi-Square is the Normal Theory Weighted Least Squares Chi-Square, *df* represents Degrees of Freedom, and RMSEA is the Root Mean Square of Approximation.

Figure 36. Path diagram for rejected Model 7.1

personal accomplishment factor was omitted. This analysis resulted in a significant Chi-square and fit indices indicating that the model did not fit the data, and it fit less well than the hypothesized model. A final analysis was performed in which the factors formerly comprising the coping resources construct were separated to form independent constructs (self-efficacy, social support, and behavioral problem-solving, respectively). This final adaptation of the hypothesized model resulted in a significant Chi-square and fit indices indicating that the model did not fit the data, and it fit less well than the two previous models. Thus, hypothesis seven was not supported by the data.

Table 24

Path Analyses Fit Indices for Hypothesis Seven

Model	X^2	*df*	*p*	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA	Interp.
7.1	204.04	25	<0.01	0.89	0.81	0.54	0.130	Bad fit
7.2	229.62	18	<0.01	0.87	0.74	0.41	0.170	Bad fit
7.3	318.44	23	<0.01	0.85	0.71	0.32	0.180	Bad fit

NOTE: X^2 is Chi-Square, *df* represents Degrees of Freedom, GFI is the Goodness-of-Fit Index, AGFI is the Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index, CFI is the Comparative Fit Index, and RMSEA is the Root Mean Square of Approximation.

Summary

The results of this investigation into the relationship of school environment, counselor coping resources, and school counselor burnout were presented in this chapter. The limitations of this study and implications for future research, as well as the implications for school counselors and counselor educators, are discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The results of this investigation into the relationship of school environment, counselor coping resources, and school counselor burnout were presented in the last chapter. A discussion of these results, limitations of this study, and recommendations for future research, including implications for school counselors and counselor educators, are discussed in this chapter.

Demographic Data

Clarifying the relationship among school environment, individual coping resources, and school counselor burnout was the primary concern of this study. Therefore, school counselors licensed as a school counselor and currently counseling in North Carolina's public middle schools were recruited to participate in the study. Rural and non-rural counselors were randomly sampled for even distribution of survey packets.

Surveys were sent to 650 school counselors from across North Carolina, which resulted in 414 returned packets and a return rate of 63.6%, with 377 (or 58%) missing no data. The survey packets contained a cover letter (Appendix A, Item 1) and a survey booklet with 95 items, including 12 demographic questions. The ethnic diversity of the sample was representative of the geographical location where the study was conducted. Most of the school counselors who participated in the study identified themselves as

White. A smaller percentage of participants identified themselves as Black, and a very small percentage of counselors identified themselves as Native American, Latino, or Other. All of the participants live in North Carolina, limiting generalizability.

As indicated by the data, the "average" middle school counselor in this study was White female in her early 40s with over 14 years of experience as a school counselor and around 5 years of experience in her present position. She belongs to at least one professional counseling organization, holds only her school counseling licensure, and services between 501 and 1,000 students. The majority of the student body is White and somewhere around half qualify for and receive free/reduced lunches (and, thus, may be classified as falling within a lower socioeconomic family status). Surprisingly, the "average" counselor took time to fill out and mail the survey booklet in spite of other responsibilities. The return rate was very high, and the researcher received over 40 calls and e-mails from participants asking follow-up questions. Therefore, it might be surmised that the average school counselor is active and involved as a professional. At the very least, many school counselors were interested in the topic of burnout and willing to add their own experiences to the study. Indeed, as a group, the participants scored very high in behavioral problem-solving (see Table 15 for further information).

These North Carolina middle school counselors were somewhat older and more experienced on average than their peers in other studies on school counselor burnout (Lambie, 2002). Helping professionals in general exhibit the highest degree of burnout when first entering the field and then again after a significant number of years in the profession (Gann, 1979; Heckman, 1980). However, Lambie (2002) found that

experience has the greatest impact on the three factors of burnout, with newer professionals having lower levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Gender has been found to have a significant effect on depersonalization, with men evidencing more depersonalization than women (Lambie, 2002). Thus, the school counselor respondents in North Carolina middle schools might be expected to experience a moderate amount of emotional exhaustion and less depersonalization. Corroborative findings in this study add weight to previous research outcomes.

Discussion of Hypotheses

Following data collection, statistical analyses were applied to test the research hypotheses. An alpha level of .05 was used in the data analyses, although corrections were made when additional analyses threatened detection of significance; in all such cases, .05 was divided by the number of additional tests (in most cases resulting in an alpha of .01. Hypotheses one and two were tested utilizing factor analyses and Cronbach's alpha. Hypothesis three was tested by using Analyses of Variance (ANOVA), whereas hypothesis four was tested by utilizing Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. Multiple regression was utilized to test hypothesis five, and hypotheses six and seven were tested using confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling. A discussion of the findings related to each research hypothesis follows.

Hypothesis One

It was predicted in hypothesis one that the Climate of School Support Scale (CSSS) would represent one factor—school climate—for the sample of middle school

counselors. The hypothesis was supported, although one item regarding degree of support from students was omitted. The resulting scale had a reliability of .86.

Hypothesis Two

With hypothesis two, it was predicted that the Role Questionnaire represents two factors—role conflict and role ambiguity—for the sample of middle school counselors. Although the RQ had three factors, two were found through factor analysis to be most relevant to be utilized within the parameters of this study. The two factors were included in further analyses. Therefore, hypothesis two was confirmed.

Hypothesis Three

The mean scores of non-rural and rural counselors were predicted in hypothesis three to differ for each of the seven variables studied. However, the hypothesis was not supported by analyses of data. The finding that the rural/non-rural designation was not significant was surprising. This outcome conflicts with findings of Sutton (1990) and Sutton and Southworth (1991), previously described. Gibbs (2000) and Collins (1999) found that rural school counselors tend to be younger, less educated, less experienced than non-rural peers, and to report they are more socially, culturally, and professionally isolated. However, the ages, education and experience levels, and professional membership of the rural and non-rural groups within the current study were very similar.

The lack of significance in the study may be the result of participant homogeneity, as so many respondents were White and close in age. Another confound is the possibility that many of the school counselors have spent time working in both rural and non-rural schools. In retrospect, that question might have helped tease out some of the

differences among groups. It also may have been important to know if the school counselor lives where the school is located. Commuting to work is more and more common, and residing in a city would give a "rural school counselor" many opportunities for resources, varied experiences, and social supports that may skew the results due to lack of information. Similarly, a question about the number of school counselors employed by the school could be compared to student enrollment to ascertain how the duties may be different. Thus, unexpected findings may be related to accessibility of supports that were not directly identified within the study (i.e., availability of supervision or guidance by directors of school counseling programs, collegial relationships within the district or area, and availability of non-human resources).

It is particularly interesting to note that out of the 325 surveys mailed to rural school counselors, only 39.38% were returned. In contrast, 87.08% of the non-rural school counselors returned their completed survey booklets. This is a phenomenal number if the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction statistics (and therefore the mailing lists) were accurate. One must speculate about why more than two times as many non-rural school counselors returned their packets.

Rural school counselors are often depicted in the burnout literature as the "jacks of all trades," the well-rounded professionals who put out fires all day in rural schools that are growing larger and are increasingly beset by more escalating challenges (e.g., Sutton, 1988; Sutton and Southworth, 1990). It could be that the truly burned out rural school counselors did not respond to the mailings. On the other hand, institutional policies in non-rural schools may emphasize paperwork tasks, including answering one's

professional mail. Whereas the organization of rural schools has been characterized as nonbureaucratic, with low control and thus increased autonomy of school counselors, which emphasizes quality rather than quantity of service (McIntire, Marion, & Quaglia, 1990), the reverse may be true in non-rural systems. Indeed, the majority of non-rural respondents returned their packets within a week of the initial mailing.

Hypothesis Four

Hypothesis four predicted that rural participants who reported a more positive school climate, low role conflict and role ambiguity, high self-esteem, high social support, and high behavioral problem-solving coping resources would indicate different levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment than their non-rural peers. This hypothesis was supported.

For rural participants, nineteen statistically significant correlations were found among the nine variables under investigation, and twenty-one statistically significant correlations were found for their non-rural peers ($p = 0.01$). Of these, eleven correlations ranged from .40 to .88. These correlations, which indicated the strongest relationships among the variables, had the most practical significance of the hypothesis four findings, and these relationships will be fully discussed below. Among the eleven correlations, only one relationship was shared by rural and non-rural school counselors; for both groups, self-efficacy was very highly positively correlated with emotional exhaustion (.85 for non-rural participants and .88 for rural participants).

There were two other significant correlations for rural participants. First, depersonalization was positively correlated with behavioral problem-solving (.46). As

behavioral problem-solving increased, so too did subjective perceptions of depersonalization. The more task-oriented school counselors, therefore, were more likely to report keeping an emotional distance from their student clientele.

Secondly, for the rural school counselor participants, depersonalization was negatively correlated with lack of personal accomplishment (.42). Said another way, as personal accomplishment increased, so too did depersonalization and vice versa. Thus, the more active these school counselors were in managing tasks, the more successful they felt about their personal career accomplishments, despite an increased perception of emotional withdrawal from their student clients.

Thus, counselors who fall within the high range of coping through tasks may be at risk of losing the compassion and connections necessary to personalize relationships. Their role as "human doings" rather than human beings seems to take a toll on interactions with students. One might speculate about which tasks triggered this finding. In additional studies, it will be important to investigate which tasks school counselors consider most likely to engender burnout. Recent legislation such as No Child Left Behind may have some bearing on the strains and stresses experienced, as evidenced by handwritten notes on the surveys many school counselors returned.

There were seven significant findings for non-rural participants. In addition to the overall finding that self-efficacy was positively related to emotional exhaustion, self-efficacy was also positively related to depersonalization for non-rural school counselor participants (.46). This finding indicates that those who perceived themselves as highly capable were more likely to hold unrealistic expectations that led to burnout. As

speculated in Maslach's theory of burnout, it may be that those with higher self-efficacy perceive more choices within their role and become worn out emotionally from trying to do too much, eventually resulting in lack of attention and connections to other people. Those who resolved problems through action were more likely to see themselves as successful but also more likely to distance themselves from others while performing tasks in an effort to live up to their high expectations.

Perhaps in meeting the demands of their colleagues, some counselors choose to perform tasks that do not fulfill them professionally and distance them from students. A school counselor who assesses her personal accomplishment based on tasks completed may be less likely, when working in a social environment, to meet paperwork goals. The reverse may also be true. Test coordination, scheduling, and other tasks that grease the bureaucratic wheels may please administrators, teachers, and parents, but secretarial responsibilities may frustrate counselors who wish to spend more time with students in counseling or guidance settings (Schwallie-Giddis, ter Maat, & Pak, 2003; Sparks & Taft, 2004).

For non-rural participants, role ambiguity was found to be negatively related to school climate (.55) and positively correlated to role conflict (.59). Thus, as role ambiguity increased, school climate was thought to be less positive. Relatedly, as role ambiguity increased, role conflict also increased. Role ambiguity was also found to be positively correlated with emotional exhaustion (.41) and self-efficacy (.40) for non-rural participants. Thus, as role ambiguity increased, participants reported feeling more emotionally exhausted. Interestingly, as role ambiguity increased, so too did self-

efficacy. Role conflict was positively correlated with emotional exhaustion (.46) for non-rural participants. As role conflict increased, participants reported becoming more emotionally exhausted. These findings are consistent with expectations and past research.

No significant relationship was found between behavioral problem-solving and emotional exhaustion. This finding was unexpected because one might expect those who become highly active to wear themselves down over time. The key factor in the outcome may be the function the activity has for the individual. Some people may find comfort in repetitive tasks rather than ruminating on problems, whereas others may experience increased emotional exhaustion due to the sheer number of tasks. It is probable that the difference in function of the coping (not readily discernable with these instruments) exists and that the groups cancel each other's effects out. For example, some counselors may enjoy varying their work day with paperwork tasks, whereas others may experience such tasks as a waste of time and/or improper for the role of school counselor. It may be that lack of definition of their role encourages school counselors to spend more time on paperwork tasks that keep them away from others, especially psychologically.

It is equally unexpected that there was no significant correlation between self-efficacy and personal accomplishment for either group. One explanation for this finding is that school counselors, regardless of their self-efficacy, may give due consideration and weight to the systemic variables that may or may not impede progress within their role. Thus, a counselor may not blame him- or herself or make judgments about personal capabilities just because the opportunity does not exist within the present position to

accomplish all of one's goals. This finding indicates that the school counselors in this study were more likely to differentiate the role from themselves as human beings.

Additionally, no correlation was significant between role ambiguity and behavioral problem-solving. One might hypothesize from the role and burnout literature that lack of clear job expectations might engender more behavioral problem-solving in some people, but in other people it might enable them to be less productive because their daily duties are less defined and/or pressing. Thus, it is possible that differences in personality affected the self-reports. Conflicting temperaments may have canceled each other out, therefore resulting in no statistical significance.

Interestingly, the constructs of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment are significantly correlated and in the expected directions, as are the variables of climate, role ambiguity, and role conflict. No statistically significant relationships were found among self-efficacy, social support, and behavioral problem-solving. This was a totally unexpected finding that is not supported by the literature on these variables. However, it may be that the scale items utilized in the study were not comprehensive enough to extract the dimensions of commonality that these factors have in common as contributors to individual coping. Another possibility is that groups within the participant pool responded to the items very differently, and their responses canceled out the effects. This has implications for the path model (hypothesis seven) discussed below.

Hypothesis Five

In hypothesis five, it was predicted that the factors comprising the coping resources construct (self-efficacy, social support, and behavioral problem-solving) moderate the relationship between school environment and burnout factors. Of the nine analyses conducted, none revealed a statistically significant moderating relationship. Thus, on the basis of these findings, it may be hypothesized that the coping resource variables act as mediating rather than moderating variables (as examined in hypothesis seven).

Hypothesis Six

Hypothesis six predicted that the school environment factors (the school climate of support, role conflict, and role ambiguity felt by the school counselor) directly affect burnout, which is represented by the factors of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. When the hypothesized model did not fit, the researcher tried two models that seemed to be easily rationalized by the burnout literature. Although the hypothesized model did not fit as well as the model in which personal accomplishment was omitted, hypothesis six was partially supported. The decision to remove one of the factors theorized to contribute to burnout was based on Lambie's (2002) test of the theoretical construct of burnout with data from 225 members of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA). Lack of support was found for Maslach's hypothesized theoretical model when path analysis with confirmatory factor analysis was completed. Lambie cited instrumental limitations and called for further research utilizing the MBI-HSS with school counselor groups.

Hypothesis Seven

A full structural equation model was predicted to fit equally well for rural and non-rural school counselors in hypothesis seven. The model was a more sophisticated version of hypothesis six, the difference being the addition of coping resources as a mediating construct. Unfortunately, this hypothesis could be only partially tested, as there were not sufficient rural participants for sufficient power. However, results of hypothesis three make findings of difference in a path model unlikely. Similarly, the finding that the three variables of self-efficacy, social support, and behavioral problem-solving are not significantly correlated with one another nullifies the likelihood that they may comprise one underlying construct.

Utilizing data from all participants, the hypothesized model was tested and rejected. Though subsequent models were theorized from the burnout literature and were tested, no model hypothesized had an acceptable fit. It may be that the variables selected neither moderate nor mediate the school environment and burnout for this sample of middle school counselors. However, when each of the variables was added an exogenous factor (separately and later in groups), the resulting models fit less well than the model hypothesized.

It is also possible that the instruments selected for this study were not worded in such a way to pick up on the effects. The questions were general, and participants were asked to apply the questions within the context of their school counselor position. Because the questions may have been considered vague, the answers might have been less specific than would be necessary to pinpoint the underlying relationships. Indeed,

the definitions of the factors may need to be better defined for what they mean to school counselors, and the scales could be worded to appeal to a specific dimension of the job (i.e, test coordination). However, the data generated by the methodology and assessment instruments chosen for this study indicates the best available model is also the most parsimonious model, that which was confirmed in hypothesis six.

Summary of Findings

Overall, 84% of the school counselor participants rated the role conflict in their school as moderate to high and 62% of the respondents rated their school counseling position as having a moderate to high degree of role ambiguity. Despite these ongoing issues, the majority (93%) also rated their school as having a moderate to highly supportive climate and themselves (85%) as having moderate to high levels of support from family and friends. Seventy-four percent of respondents reported moderate to high self-efficacy scores, and 97% perceived themselves to be moderately to highly behavioral in their problem-solving. However, 66% of the participants reported moderate to high levels of emotional exhaustion and 77% scored in the moderate to high range of depersonalization. Even so, the vast majority (95%) of individuals reported low to moderate levels of (lack of) personal accomplishment.

The school locale does seem to affect how school counselors operate within their respective systems, whether they thrive or just survive. Rural school counselors in this study were more likely to react to react to role conflict with action, although their actions were highly correlated with increased emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. However, with increased role ambiguity and role conflict, they tended to report more

personal accomplishment, likely because the most common way of coping with role issues appeared to be through behavioral problem-solving. Unfortunately, the increase in action also appeared to contribute to depersonalization. Ultimately, it appears that these dynamics occur in circular feedback loops, each variable interacting with the other.

In contrast, non-rural school counselors appeared to be more in tune with their social atmosphere, be that at school or with friends and family. They seemed to be more likely to seek support from others when experiencing role ambiguity and to feel more personal accomplishment when such support was high. Behavioral problem solving tended to increase their depersonalization rates, or perhaps those who were inclined to focus on tasks were already less likely to engage in meaningful ways with people.

Interestingly, the higher the self-esteem the participant reported, the higher the level of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion. Thus, it seems that there is a need to help school counselors find a balance between high expectations of themselves and the tasks in which they engage. Unfortunately, it may also be possible that people who engage in more tasks (successfully) build their self-efficacy as they complete them. If that is the case, then it may be necessary to help school counselors find less draining ways of meeting the need to feel capable in their roles. More research needs to be conducted to help delineate the direction by which these processes take place.

Based on these findings, it seems that some sort of burnout prevention and/or intervention is necessary for a vast number of middle school counselors, especially as related to depersonalization and emotional exhaustion. It is important that school counselors be consulted about the specific tasks and strains that impact them and affect

their sense of emotional depletion. Psychic energy may be seen as a necessary ingredient in creating empathic therapeutic relationships and productive working alliances with both colleagues and students. Such high levels of burnout interfere with the optimal functioning of the school and have consequences for student outcomes.

Issues of role continue to be dominant in the school counselor literature, and these findings highlight the need for reform and continued advocacy by school counselors, counselor educators, parents, and other stakeholders in the educational enterprise. As the many comments school counselors jotted on their survey forms indicate, there is a growing number of professional school counselors who are dissatisfied with their daily tasks. This is particularly true of non-rural participants, who were most likely to have negative consequences, as the "very good" fit of the hypothesis six path model confirmed.

Although the role of coping resources needs to be further studied as they relate to school counselor burnout, it may be even more important to study how specific tasks directly contribute to the degree of burnout experienced. Self-efficacy, behavioral problem-solving, and social support may be moderators of specific tasks that were not explored in the current study.

Discussion of Additional Findings

The comments school counselor participants wrote unsolicited along the survey booklets they returned reveal the extent to which school counselors applaud efforts to investigate the stresses and strains of their chosen profession. Comments ranged from, "Hooray! Bless you, you are doing the Lord's work," and "I am so excited by this study

and cannot wait to see what the results are," to "the biggest indicator of burnout wasn't covered in this survey—testing!" and "Who will see my completed survey? Will anyone be able to know my location?" Four respondents sent in one-page letters to better address their burnout concerns. Three individuals included clippings from the local newspaper regarding standardized testing. North Carolina middle school counselors, based on their degree of participation in this study, consider burnout to be a critical issue. One participant called to tell me about her friend who was leaving the profession at the end of this year due to burnout. Another called to tell me she had switched assignments at the beginning of the new semester because she was so tired of middle school life and had heard things were better at the high school level. (She promised to fill the forms out as she had felt during her six years as a middle school counselor.) Such an outpouring of sentiment and enthusiasm should be trusted, and it would be quite helpful to create focus groups based on this research to further investigate specific task-related concerns that were overlooked in this study.

Potential Limitations

There are several potential limitations to the study that must be recognized when interpreting the results and generalizing them to school counselors. These limitations include issues of sampling, data collection, and participation, as well assessment instrument considerations and the generalizability of results.

Sampling, Data Collection, and Participation

Efforts were made to recruit a large number of school counselors, but participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Certain characteristics of the volunteers

must be considered, as it might be argued that the individuals who completed and returned the survey instrument demonstrated a higher degree of behavioral problem-solving and less role conflict and role ambiguity than did others who didn't not return their surveys. Because voluntary participation could skew the results, an incentive of four drawings of $25 was incorporated into the study design.

Reliance on self-report without confirmation of variables from other sources limits the objectivity of the data. However, the perceptions of the school counselors were sought above the interpretations of others in the school environment. Unfortunately, it is possible that social desirability may have spurred some participants to skew their answers. Fear of reprisals from supervisors or administrators may also have affected school counselor self-reports. Because of this possibility, the cover letter addressed the degree of confidentiality. Despite this precaution, the researcher received 23 calls from participants, the majority of whom inquired about how the results would be reported and who would see the completed survey booklets.

The timing of the data collection also may have affected results. During the middle of the spring semester, school counselors are often involved in a myriad of tasks that are time-specific. Such tasks include, but are not limited to, coordinating testing, helping students plan their schedules for the following year, facilitating career development guidance lessons, and proctoring exams. Survey packets were mailed out strategically two weeks prior to spring break so that the school counselor would have time within the next weeks to fill the survey out if he or she were willing. This time was chosen specifically because it was thought to be a particularly busy time for the

population and finding that the school counselors were stressed or burned out would be more like than at other times. With this understanding of the timing of the study, pains were taken to ensure that the survey was as brief as possible and that the instructions were clear so that those surveyed would be more willing to participate.

Instrumentation

Several issues related to the assessment instruments chosen posed limiting factors to this study. Foremost, the reliability of several of the instruments utilized in the study fell below .80, although in other studies higher reliabilities were reported. Because of these instrumentation inadequacies, results should be interpreted with caution. Additionally, most of the instruments were general rather than asking specific questions directly related to the school counselor's position. Thus, data gathered through these instruments may be vague; unidentified factors may create statistical noise, whereas lack of specificity may interfere with a clear picture of the relationships among the variables assessed.

Generalizability

Results are limited in applicability and implications because they were limited by the geographical area of North Carolina. All the participants were middle school counselors, although they were drawn from all possible demographic variables represented within the population. Additional research is needed that includes a more geographically diverse sample if results are to represent a broader and more varied group of school counselors.

Implications

Understanding the relationship between school environment, counselor coping resources, and burnout can help school counselors, administrators, and counselor educators understand the dimensions of the issues that affect school counselor productivity and well-being. The implications of the study for each group will be discussed below.

School Counselors

The results of this study give weight to the need for increased attention to the subjective experiences of school counselors in their unique settings. It is important to document how individual ways of coping with the roles and tasks interact and ultimately affect the school counselor. Professional development seminars could be developed to help school counselors become more aware of the situational factors that contribute to their subjective experience of the dimensions of burnout. They could assess their ability to deal with the stressors productively, in a group setting brainstorm new ways of dealing with the strains, and make contacts with other professionals who may serve as supports. It might be helpful to initiate a school counselor listserve through which their concerns can be expressed and additional support can be located.

As part of the understanding of how burnout affects them personally and professionally, school counselors might find ways to make their career-related concerns the subject of town hall meetings and ways of actively seeking solutions so that their behavior-based coping contributes in restorative rather than draining ways. A call for advocacy could result from such a grassroots movement, and school counselors could be

helped to find productive ways of working with administrators and policymakers to make changes to their current role definition (or lack thereof).

School Systems

The high degree of burnout and empirical evidence that climate, role conflict, and role ambiguity predict burnout variables in school counselors (at least for this sample) may be utilized by school counselors, counselor educators, and other interested parties to lobby for more supports within the system, as well as further investigations of specific roles that contribute more than others to the problem. Rural and non-rural school districts could examine the empirical findings to provide situation-specific reform for the benefit of their school counselor employees. Linking this research to other research related to the effects of burned-out mental health professionals on their clients might further the impetus for wide-reaching policy changes in counselor role definition.

Counselor Educators

It may be argued that counselor educators have an ethical duty to inform school counselors-in-training about stresses and strains inherent in the profession. As such, counselor educators can inform students about the link between school climate and role and the dimensions of burnout. They can educate future school counselors about the symptoms of burnout and how burnout progresses over time and as a continuum. Based on the findings of this study, school counselors-in-training can be helped to anticipate what types of strains are more likely in different school locales. Counselor educators can assist students in assessing how their personal coping abilities may interact in the

environment they have chosen for themselves and train them to meet the special needs of the system and their school counseling colleagues.

The same might be true for the role counselor educators might take on in educating current school counselors about burnout and school settings. Certainly, continued research and publishing in the school counseling journals may increase understanding of the issues and complicated dynamics. Intervention manuals, workshops, and conference presentations would contribute positively to prevention and/or amelioration of problems for school counselors.

Recommendations for Future Research

Perhaps the most important contribution counselor educators can make to the study of burnout is further development of instruments to measure it accurately. Further development of the MBI-HSS or an alternative instrument seems to be high priority, as its usefulness with school counselors appears somewhat limited. Instruments specific to school counselors needs to be developed to assess how tasks like testing—and the time spent engaging in those tasks—affect the overall functioning of the school counselor and ultimately the services provided to all students. Particular attention needs to be paid to the psychometric properties of the instruments, as many are not reliable enough to provide results that can be accepted without extreme caution.

Further studies on school counselors of all levels are necessary, as are studies in which school counselors are surveyed at different times in the semester. A national sample should be targeted through public school e-mail systems to ensure that future studies generalize to a larger population. More specific assessments of the coping

resources school counselors utilize would be very beneficial in the furtherance of future investigations on the link between burnout and coping and would propel the corroboration and elaboration of theory. Finally, qualitative studies would complement quantitative data and add richness to our understanding of how organizational factors, context, and personal factors affect school counselor burnout.

Conclusion

Although limited in its applicability, this study resulted in the first complex, integrated model of burnout for counselors. Such complex, concurrent influences are more reflective of the real world of the school counselor and of the experience of burnout. Although most researchers have focused primarily on singular predictors of burnout rather than simultaneous investigations on multiple predictors and their interactional influences (Kottler & Hazler, 1996), perhaps this study will spark interest in models that will bridge the gap in the literature.

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Appendix A. Full Study Documents
Item 1: *Letter to Potential Participants*

March 4, 2005

Dear Middle School Counselor,

Greetings! My name is Julie Stephan, and I am currently conducting a study investigating factors that contribute to the job-related burnout of middle school counselors. My experiences as an educator and counselor in middle schools in Texas and North Carolina have provided me with an understanding of what school counselors are up against. I know that being a school counselor is not easy, and as a counselor educator, I am passionate about researching the stresses and strains inherent in the profession so they can be alleviated through systemic change.

Because you were randomly selected from the population of middle school counselors in North Carolina, your participation in this research opportunity is crucial. *Your perspective is really needed!* It will advance our knowledge about school stressors, personal coping resources, and burnout of North Carolina's middle school counselors. This information will provide insight into optimal methods of training school counselors to deal with the pressures, which will ultimately affect students and the whole school climate. Ultimately, however, it will enable researchers to examine how institutional organization and support affect school counselors, which may have a wide-reaching impact on policy-making in this state.

Please complete the enclosed survey and mail it back to me in the enclosed pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope. It is important that you answer all questions as honestly as possible and avoid leaving any unanswered. The completion time for the enclosed booklet will be *approximately 15 minutes*. **If you respond to this letter and mail back the completed booklet, your name will be added to a lottery in which four participants will each receive $25.00.**

You have many rights as a participant of this research. First, participation is voluntary. Please keep in mind that you may decide not to participate in this project at any time. Also, anonymity for each participant is highly valued and will be maintained at all times. Please be assured that your response will be reported on a group basis only, thereby avoiding the possibility of individual identification. Numbering on the enclosed questionnaire is for follow-up purposes only. All information will be kept confidential, and paper materials will be stored in a secured, locked facility for three years before being shredded.

By filling out the forms and mailing them in the enclosed envelope, I will assume you have consented to participate in this study. Please keep this letter as a copy of your rights as a participant. This study is not expected to involve any risk of harm greater than that encountered in daily life. Participants may request a summary of results by checking the appropriate box on the booklet.

Your timely response is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me [(336) 334-3570 or jbstepha@uncg.edu] or my faculty advisor, Dr. L. DiAnne Borders [(336) 334-3425 or borders@uncg.edu]. For additional information about the rights of research participants in research, contact Mr. Eric Allen at (336) 256-1482. Thank you so much for your assistance!

Sincerely,
Julie Stephan, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Appendix A, Item 2: *Climate of School Support*

Support has been defined as encouragement or help. Please indicate the degree to which you believe each statement applies to you personally by CIRCLING the appropriate number.

	How often are the following groups supportive of your efforts as school counselor?			
	Never	Some-times	Often	Usually/ Always
1. Principal(s) in your school	1	2	3	4
2. Teachers in your school	1	2	3	4
3. Student support services staff	1	2	3	4
4. School staff (secretaries, custodians, etc.)	1	2	3	4
5. Parents of students in your school	1	2	3	4
6. Students	1	2	3	4
7. School superintendent(s)	1	2	3	4
8. Members of your school community in general	1	2	3	4

Appendix A, Item 3: *Multidimensional Support Scale-Confidant Availability*

Below are some questions about the kind of help and support you have available to you in coping with your life at present. The questions refer to people who might have been providing support to you IN THE LAST MONTH. For each item, please *circle the alternative* that shows your answer. You will give two answers per line.

Think of your FAMILY AND CLOSE FRIENDS, especially the 2-3 most important to you.

					Would have liked them to do this...		
	Never	Some-times	Often	Usually/ always	More often	Less often	Just right
1. How often did they really listen to you when you talked about your concerns or problems?	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
2. How often did you feel that they were really trying to understand your problems?	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
3. How often did they try to take your mind off problems by joking or chattering about other things?	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
4. How often did they really make you feel loved?	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
5. How often did they help you in practical ways, like doing things for you?	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
6. How often did they answer your questions or Give advice about how to solve your problems?	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
7. How often could you use them as examples of how to deal with your problems?	1	2	3	4	1	2	3

Appendix A, Item 4: *Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale-General Efficacy*

Please indicate the degree to which you believe each statement applies to you personally by indicating to the right of the item the appropriate number, according to the following key:

1 = Highly improbable
2 = Improbable
3 = Equally improbable or probable, not sure
4 = Probable
5 = Highly probable

In the future I expect that I will…

1.	be unable to accomplish my goals.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	not be very good at learning new skills.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	carry through my responsibilities successfully.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	discover that the good in life outweighs the bad.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	get the promotions I deserve.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	succeed in the projects I undertake.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	discover that my life is not getting much better.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	be listened to when I speak.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	succeed at most things I try.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	be successful in my endeavors in the long run.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix A, Item 5: *Life Events Questionnaire*

Have any of the following life events or problems happened to you during the last two years? Please check the box or boxes corresponding to when any event happened or began.

	Present-6 mos.	6-12 months	12-24 months
You yourself suffered a serious illness, injury, or an assault.			
A serious illness, injury, or assault happened to a close relative.			
Your parent, child, or spouse died.			
A close family friend or another relative (aunt, cousin, grand-parent) died.			
You had a separation due to marital difficulties.			
You broke off a steady relationship.			
You had a serious problem with a close friend, neighbor, or relative.			
You became unemployed or you were seeking work unsuccess-fully for more than one month.			
You were fired from your job.			
You had a major financial crisis.			
You had problems with the police and a court appearance.			
Something you valued was lost or stolen.			

Appendix A, Item 6: *Role Questionnaire*

Below is a list of statements often made about the role of a counselor. Please read each one and indicate how accurate you feel it is on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very true about your job and 7 is very untrue about your job. (Circle one number for each.)

	VERY TRUE						VERY UNTRUE
1. I have to do things that should be done differently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I have to work on unnecessary things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I receive an assignment without proper human power to complete it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I know exactly what is expected of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I feel certain about how much authority I have.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Clear, planned goals exist for my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I know that I have divided my time properly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I know what my responsibilities are.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Clear explanations are given for what has to be done.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix A, Item 7: *Social Problem Solving Inventory-Behavior*

Below is a series of statements that describe the way some people might think, feel, and behave when they are faced with problems in everyday living. We are talking about important problems that could have a significant effect on your well-being or the well-being of your loved ones, such as a health-related problem, a dispute with a family member, or a problem with your performance at work. Please read each statement and carefully select one of the numbers below that indicates the extent to which the statement is true of you. Consider yourself as you typically think, feel, and behave when you are faced with problems in living.

	Not True	Slightly True	Neutral	True	Very True
1. I spend too much time worrying about my problems instead of trying to solve them.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I usually wait to see if a problem will resolve itself first, before trying to solve it myself.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When a problem occurs in my life, I usually put off trying to solve it for as long as possible.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I usually go out of my way to avoid having to deal with problems in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I usually confront my problems “head on,” instead of trying to avoid them.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I usually prefer to avoid problems instead of confronting them and being forced to deal with them.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I often put off solving problems until it is too late to do anything about them.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I think that I spend more time avoiding my problems than solving them.	1	2	3	4	5
9. When I am faced with a difficult problem, I usually try to avoid it or I go to someone else for help in solving it.	1	2	3	4	5
10. When I have negative feelings, I tend to just go along with the mood instead of trying to find out what problem might be causing them.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix A, Item 8: *School Counselor Demographic Survey*

Please answer the following questions about yourself and your school:

1. Please circle your gender: (1) Female (2) Male

2. What is your age? _____

3. Which of the following best describes your ethnic group? (Circle only one number)

(1) Asian (2) Black (3) Latino
(4) Native American (5) White (6) Other: _____

4. Please indicate your highest academic degree attained: (Circle only one number)

(1) Bachelor (2) Master's (3) Specialist
(4) Doctoral (5) Other: _____

5. Approximately how many years of experience do you have as a school counselor? _____ years

6. How long have you worked in your present position? _____ years

7. What is your school's current student enrollment? _____

8. What is the total percentage of minority students at your school? _____

9. What is the percentage of students at your school who receive free or reduced-price lunches? _____

10. Please specify membership in professional organization(s).

11. What licenses and certifications do you hold?

12. Have you ever been a teacher? _____ If so, how many years? _____

Appendix A, Item 9: *Contact Sheet*

Participant Name: _____

Participant Address: _____

_____

Participant Phone Number: _____

Participant Email Address: _____

Would you like a summary of research findings?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you be willing to be contacted at some point in the future as a follow up to this study?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Appendix A, Items 10 and 11: *Postcards*

Dear School Counseling Colleague,

Thank you for your support in the study on school counselors' feelings of burnout and occupational stress. Your assistance will contribute to the continuous development of our profession.

If you have not completed and returned the materials, please do so as soon as possible. The data from this study will support the development of school counselor education and possible in-service trainings. I f you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. My address, e-mail, and telephone number are provided in the study's cover letter. If you need another packet, please call (336) 549-0725.

Thank you again for your assistance,
Julie Stephan, M.A.
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Dear Colleague,

Thank you for your participation in this study. Your perceptions will contribute to the growth and development of the school counseling profession.

If you have not completed and returned the materials, please do so as soon as possible. The data from this study will support the development of school counselor education and possible in-service trainings. I f you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. My address, e-mail, and telephone number are provided in the study's cover letter. If you need another packet, please call (336) 549-0725.

Thank you again for your help,
Julie Stephan, M.A.
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Appendix B. Pilot Study Documents
Item 1: *Letter to Pilot Study Participants*

December 1, 2004

Dear Middle School Colleague,

Greetings! My name is Julie Stephan, and I am currently conducting a study investigating factors that contribute to the job-related burnout of middle school counselors. My experiences as an educator and counselor in middle schools in Texas and North Carolina have provided me with an understanding of what school counselors are up against. I know that being a school counselor is not easy, and as a counselor educator, I am passionate about researching the stresses and strains inherent in the profession so they can be alleviated through systemic change.

Because you were randomly selected from the population of middle school counselors in North Carolina, your participation in this research opportunity is crucial. *Your perspective is really needed!* It will advance our knowledge about school stressors, personal coping resources, and burnout of North Carolina's middle school counselors. This information will provide insight into optimal methods of training school counselors to deal with the pressures, which will ultimately affect students and the whole school climate. Ultimately, however, it will enable researchers to examine how institutional organization and support affect school counselors, which may have a wide-reaching impact on policy-making in this state.

Please complete the enclosed survey and mail it back to me in the enclosed pre-addressed, postage-paid envelope. It is important that you answer all questions as honestly as possible and avoid leaving any unanswered. The completion time for the enclosed booklet will be approximately 30 minutes. If you respond to this letter and mail back the completed booklet, your name will be added to a lottery in which four participants will each receive $25.00.

You have many rights as a participant of this research. First, participation is voluntary. Please keep in mind that you may decide not to participate in this project at any time. Also, anonymity for each participant is highly valued and will be maintained at all times. Please be assured that your response will be reported on a group basis only, thereby avoiding the possibility of individual identification. Numbering on the enclosed questionnaire is for follow-up purposes only. All information will be kept confidential, and your materials will be stored in a secured, locked facility for three years before being shredded.

By filling out the forms and mailing them in the enclosed envelope, I will assume you have consented to participate in this study. Please keep this letter as a copy of your rights as a participant. This study is not expected to involve any risk of harm greater than that encountered in daily life. Participants may request a summary of results by checking the appropriate box on the booklet.

Your timely response is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me [(336) 334-3570 or jbstepha@uncg.edu] or my faculty advisor, Dr. L. DiAnne Borders [(336) 334-3425 or borders@uncg.edu]. For additional information about the rights of research participants in research, contact Mr. Eric Allen at (336) 256-1482. Thank you so much for your assistance!

Sincerely,
Julie Stephan, M.A.
Doctoral Student
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Appendix B, Item 2: *Climate of School Support Scale*

Support has been defined as encouragement or help. Please indicate the degree to which you believe each statement applies to you personally by CIRCLING the appropriate number. You will give two answers per line.

	How often are the following groups supportive of your efforts as school counselor?				You would have liked them to be supportive of your efforts…		
	Never	Some-times	Often	Usually/ Always	More often	Less often	Just right
1. Principal(s) in your school	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
2. Teachers in your school	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
3. Support staff in your school	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
4. Parents of students in your school	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
5. Students in your school	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
6. School superintendent(s)	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
7. Members of your school community in general	1	2	3	4	1	2	3

8. What is the general climate of your school?	Negative		Neutral		Positive
	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B, Item 3: *Multidimensional Support Scale-Confidant Availability*

Below are some questions about the kind of help and support you have available to you in coping with your life at present. The questions refer to people who might have been providing support to you IN THE LAST MONTH. For each item, please *circle the alternative* that shows your answer. You will give two answers per line.

Think of your FAMILY AND CLOSE FRIENDS, especially the 2-3 most important to you.

					Would have liked them to do this...		
	Never	Some-times	Often	Usually/ always	More often	Less often	Just right
1. How often did they really listen to you when you talked about your concerns or problems?	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
2. How often did you feel that they were really trying to understand your problems?	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
3. How often did they try to take your mind off problems by joking or chattering about other things?	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
4. How often did they really make you feel loved?	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
5. How often did they help you in practical ways, like doing things for you?	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
6. How often did they answer your questions or Give advice about how to solve your problems?	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
7. How often could you use them as examples of how to deal with your problems?	1	2	3	4	1	2	3

Appendix B, Item 4: *Generalized Expectancy for Success Scale-General Efficacy*

Please indicate the degree to which you believe each statement applies to you personally by indicating to the right of the item the appropriate number, according to the following key:

1 = Highly improbable
2 = Improbable
3 = Equally improbable or probable, not sure
4 = Probable
5 = Highly probable

In the future I expect that I will…

1. be unable to accomplish my goals.	1	2	3	4	5
11. not be very good at learning new skills.	1	2	3	4	5
12. carry through my responsibilities successfully.	1	2	3	4	5
13. discover that the good in life outweighs the bad.	1	2	3	4	5
14. get the promotions I deserve.	1	2	3	4	5
15. succeed in the projects I undertake.	1	2	3	4	5
16. discover that my life is not getting much better.	1	2	3	4	5
17. be listened to when I speak.	1	2	3	4	5
18. succeed at most things I try.	1	2	3	4	5
19. be successful in my endeavors in the long run.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B, Item 5: *Life Events Questionnaire*

Have any of the following life events or problems happened to you during the last two years? Please check the box or boxes corresponding to when any event happened or began.

	Present-6 mos.	6-12 months	12-24 months
You yourself suffered a serious illness, injury, or an assault.			
A serious illness, injury, or assault happened to a close relative.			
Your parent, child, or spouse died.			
A close family friend or another relative (aunt, cousin, grand-parent) died.			
You had a separation due to marital difficulties.			
You broke off a steady relationship.			
You had a serious problem with a close friend, neighbor, or relative.			
You became unemployed or you were seeking work unsuccess-fully for more than one month.			
You were fired from your job.			
You had a major financial crisis.			
You had problems with the police and a court appearance.			
Something you valued was lost or stolen.			

Appendix B, Item 6: *Role Questionnaire*

Below is a list of statements often made about the role of a counselor. Please read each one and indicate how accurate you feel it is on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 is very true about your job and 7 is very untrue about your job. (Circle one number for each.)

	VERY TRUE						VERY UNTRUE
1. I have to do things that should be done differently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. I have to work on unnecessary things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I receive an assignment without proper human power to complete it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I know exactly what is expected of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. I feel certain about how much authority I have.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. Clear, planned goals exist for my job.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I know that I have divided my time properly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. I know what my responsibilities are.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14. Clear explanations are given for what has to be done.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix B, Item 7: *Social Problem-Solving Inventory-Behavior*

Below is a series of statements that describe the way some people might think, feel, and behave when they are faced with problems in everyday living. We are talking about important problems that could have a significant effect on your well-being or the well-being of your loved ones, such as a health-related problem, a dispute with a family member, or a problem with your performance at work. Please read each statement and carefully select one of the numbers below that indicates the extent to which the statement is true of you. Consider yourself as you typically think, feel, and behave when you are faced with problems in living.

	Not True	Slightly True	Neutral	True	Very True
1. I spend too much time worrying about my problems instead of trying to solve them.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I usually wait to see if a problem will resolve itself first, before trying to solve it myself.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When a problem occurs in my life, I usually put off trying to solve it for as long as possible.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I usually go out of my way to avoid having to deal with problems in my life.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I usually confront my problems “head on,” instead of trying to avoid them.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I usually prefer to avoid problems instead of confronting them and being forced to deal with them.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I often put off solving problems until it is too late to do anything about them.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I think that I spend more time avoiding my problems than solving them.	1	2	3	4	5
9. When I am faced with a difficult problem, I usually try to avoid it or I go to someone else for help in solving it.	1	2	3	4	5
10. When I have negative feelings, I tend to just go along with the mood instead of trying to find out what problem might be causing them.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B, Item 8: *School Counselor Demographic Survey*

Please answer the following questions about yourself and your school:

1. Please circle your gender: (1) Female (2) Male

2. What is your age? _____

3. Which of the following best describes your ethnic group? (Circle only one number)
(1) Asian (2) Black (3) Latino
(4) Native American (5) White (6) Other: _____

4. Please indicate your highest academic degree attained: (Circle only one number)
(1) Bachelor (2) Master's (3) Specialist
(4) Doctoral (5) Other: _____

5. Approximately how many years of experience do you have as a school counselor? _____ years

6. How long have you worked in your present position? _____ years

7. What is your school's current student enrollment? (Circle only one number)
(1) Less than 300 students (2) 300-700 students (2) More than 700 students

8. What is the total percentage of minority students at your school? (Circle only one number)
(1) Under 10% (2) 10 to 25%
(3) 25 to 50% (4) 50 to 75%
(5) 75 to 90% (6) Above 90%

9. What is the percentage of students at your school who receive free or reduced-price lunches?

(1) Under 10% (4) 50 to 75%
(2) 10 to 25% (3) 25 to 50%
(5) 75 to 90% (6) Above 90

20. Would you like a summary of research findings?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Appendix B, Item 9: *Email 1*

Dear School Counseling Colleague,

Thank you for your support in the study on school counselors' feelings of burnout and occupational stress. Your assistance will contribute to the continuous development of our profession.

If you have not completed and returned the materials, please do so as soon as possible. The data from this study will support the development of school counselor education and possible in-service trainings. I f you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. My address, e-mail, and telephone number are provided in the study's cover letter. If you need another packet, please call (336) 549-0725.

Thank you again for your assistance,

Julie Stephan, M.A.
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Appendix B, Item 10: *Email 2*

Dear Colleague,

Thank you for your participation in this study. Your perceptions will contribute to the growth and development of the school counseling profession.

If you have not completed and returned the materials, please do so as soon as possible. The data from this study will support the development of school counselor education and possible in-service trainings. I f you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. My address, e-mail, and telephone number are provided in the study's cover letter. If you need another packet, please call (336) 549-0725.

Thank you again for your help,

Julie Stephan, M.A.
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Appendix C. Tables of Statistical Analyses
Item 1: *Descriptive Statistics for CSSS (N = 414)*

How often are the following groups of people supportive of your efforts as school counselor?

Item	Min	Max	Mean	*SD*
1 Principal(s)	2	4	3.45	.67
2 Teachers	1	4	2.94	.74
3 Student support services staff	1	4	3.37	.71
4 School staff such as secretaries, custodians, etc.	1	4	3.35	.73
5 Parents	1	4	2.93	.74
6 Students	2	4	3.21	.66
7 School superintendent(s)	1	4	2.81	.85
8 Members of your school community in general	1	4	3.01	.76

Appendix C, Item 2: *Descriptive Statistics for RQ (N = 414)*

Item	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. I have to do things that should be done differently.	1	7	2.65	1.67
2. I have to work on unnecessary things.	1	7	3.01	1.70
3. I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it.	1	7	3.62	1.77
4. I receive an assignment without proper human power to complete it.	1	7	3.52	1.86
5. I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently.	1	7	3.07	1.86
6. I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment.	1	7	4.44	1.90
7. I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.	1	7	4.00	1.79
8. I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not by others.	1	7	3.45	1.76
9. I know exactly what is expected of me.	1	7	3.30	1.69
10. I feel certain about how much authority I have.	1	7	3.59	1.85
11. Clear, planned goals exist for my job.	1	7	3.94	1.80
12. I know that I have divided my time properly.	1	7	4.01	1.68

Item	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
13. I know what my responsibilities are.	1	7	3.00	1.57
14. Clear explanations are given for what must be done.	1	7	3.93	1.69

Appendix C, Item 3: *Descriptive Statistics for GESS (N = 411)*

In the future I expect that I will…

Item	Min	Max	Mean	*SD*
1. be unable to accomplish my goals.	1	5	3.07	1.29
2. not be very good at learning new skills.	1	5	2.71	1.21
3. carry through my responsibilities successfully.	2	5	3.37	1.09
4. discover that the good in life outweighs the bad.	1	5	3.21	1.14
5. get the promotions I deserve.	1	5	3.49	0.92
6. succeed in the projects I undertake.	2	5	3.66	0.89
7. discover that my life is not getting much better.	1	5	2.95	1.26
8. be listened to when I speak.	3	5	4.40	0.66
9. succeed at most things I try.	1	5	3.33	1.11
10. be successful in my endeavors in the long run.	2	5	3.57	1.12

Appendix C, Item 4: *Descriptive Statistics for MDSS (N = 414)*

Item	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. How often did they really listen to you when you talked about your concerns or problems?	1	4	3.34	0.78
2. How often did you feel that they were really trying to understand your problems?	1	4	3.13	0.83
3. How often did they really make you feel loved?	1	3	2.41	0.79
4. How often did you want them make you feel loved?	1	4	2.52	0.86
5. How often did they help you in practical ways, like doing things for you or lending you money?	1	4	2.79	0.93
6. How often did they answer your questions or give advice about how to solve your problems?	1	4	2.71	0.85
7. How often could you use them as examples of how to deal with your problems?	1	4	2.63	0.80

Appendix C, Item 5: *Descriptive Statistics for SPSI (N = 414).*

Item	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. I spend too much time worrying about my problems instead of trying to solve them.	1	5	2.54	1.19
2. I usually wait to see if a problem will resolve itself first, before trying to solve it myself.	1	5	1.61	0.80
3. When a problem occurs in my life, I usually put off trying to solve it for as long as possible.	1	5	1.59	0.79
4. I usually go out of my way to avoid having to deal with problems in my life.	1	5	1.59	0.87
5. I usually confront my problems “head on,” Instead of trying to avoid them.	1	5	3.11	1.35
6. I usually prefer to avoid problems instead of confronting them and being forced to deal with them.	1	5	1.43	0.75
7. I often put off solving problems until it is too late to do anything about them.	1	5	1.74	0.84
8. I think that I spend more time avoiding my problems than solving them.	1	5	1.46	0.72

Item	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
9. When I am faced with a difficult problem, I try to avoid the problem or I go to someone else for help in solving it.	1	5	1.58	0.81
10. When I have negative feelings, I tend to just go with the mood, instead of trying to find out what might be causing these feelings.	1	5	1.93	0.83

Appendix C, Item 6: *Descriptive Statistics for MBI-HSS (N = 414)*

Item	Scale	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	EE	0	6	3.44	1.57
2	EE	0	6	3.71	1.65
3	EE	0	6	2.75	1.65
4	PA	0	6	5.19	1.12
5	DP	0	5	0.84	1.22
6	EE	0	6	1.76	1.41
7	PA	0	6	5.43	0.83
8	EE	0	6	2.34	1.61
9	PA	0	6	5.09	1.11
10	DP	0	6	1.38	1.52
11	DP	0	6	1.29	1.53
12	PA	0	6	4.29	1.33
13	EE	0	6	3.14	1.75
14	EE	0	6	3.20	1.85
15	DP	0	6	0.44	1.03

Item	Scale	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
16	EE	0	6	1.27	1.30
17	PA	2	6	5.52	0.78
18	PA	0	6	4.48	1.30
19	PA	1	6	4.68	1.27
20	EE	0	6	1.36	1.60
21	PA	0	6	5.42	0.91
22	DP	0	6	0.89	1.17

Appendix C, Item 7

Multiple Regression Results for Hypothesized Moderators: First Trial

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Standard Error of Estimate	F	Variables	B	Standard Error of Beta	Beta	T
.862	.743	.741	5.569	395.17**	Climate/ Exhaustion	-.209	.075	-.073	-2.788
					Efficacy/ Exhaustion	1.034	.032	.840	32.245
					Constant	22.789		.284	80.244**
					Climate/Efficacy/ Exhaustion	-1.424E-02	.008	-.043	-1.707
.429	.184	.178	4.002	30.77**	Climate/ Depersonalization	-.175	.054	-.151	-3.247*
					Efficacy/ Depersonalization	.180	.023	.363	7.812**
					Constant	4.818	.204		23.607**
					Climate/Efficacy/ Depersonalization	-3.034E-04	.006	-.002	-.051
.292	.085	.078	4.939	12.706**	Climate/ Accomplishment	.321	.064	.239	4.997**
					Social Support/ Accomplishment	.135	.056	.115	2.401*
					Constant	40.144	.244		164.220**
					Climate/ Social Support/ Accomplishment	-1.702E-02	.013	-.064	-1.354

* $p < 0.01$ ** $p < 0.001$

Appendix C, Item 8

Multiple Regression Results for Hypothesized Moderators: Second Trial

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Standard Error of Estimate	F	Variables	B	Standard Error of Beta	Beta	T
.879	.772	.770	5.245	462.932**	Role Conflict/ Exhaustion	-.199	.030	-.163	-6.531**
					Self-Efficacy/ Emotional Exhaustion	1.002	.031	.814	32.482**
					Constant	22.559	.272		82.932**
					Role Conflict/Self-Efficacy/ Emotional Exhaustion	-1.427E-02	.003	-.100	-4.223**
.476	.227	.221	3.896	40.038**	Role Conflict/ Depersonalization	-.113	.023	-.230	-5.003**
					Self-Efficacy/ Depersonalization	.168	.023	.338	7.335**
					Constant	4.660	.202		23.065**
					Role Conflict/ Self-Efficacy/ Depersonalization	-6.432E-03	.003	-.112	-2.562*
.426	.181	.175	4.008	30.286**	Role Conflict/ Depersonalization	-.156	.022	-.319	-6.962**
					Behavior/ Depersonalization	.147	.041	.178	3.637**
					Constant	4.732	.201		23.586**
					Role Conflict/ Behavior/ Depersonalization	-1.143E-02	.004	-.125	-2.592*

* $p < 0.01$ ** $p < 0.001$

Appendix C, Item 9

Multiple Regression Results for Hypothesized Moderators: Third Trial

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Standard Error of Estimate	F	Variables	B	Standard Error of Beta	Beta	T
.304	.093	.086	4.919	13.931**	Role Conflict/ Accomplishment	6.377E-02	.028	.111	2.313
					Behavior/ Accomplishment	-.234	.050	-.242	-4.704**
					Constant	40.150	.246		163.055**
					Role Conflict/ Behavior/ Accomplishment	5.759E-03	.005	.054	1.064
.860	.739	.737	5.613	386.940**	Role Ambiguity/ Exhaustion	9.750E-02	.042	.061	2.309
					Efficacy/ Exhaustion	1.033	.033	.839	31.634**
					Constant	22.949	.287		79.876**
					Role Ambiguity/ Efficacy/ Exhaustion	-1.349E-03	.004	-.008	-.313
.421	.177	.171	4.019	29.384**	Role Ambiguity/ Depersonalization	8.058E-02	.030	.126	2.665*
					Efficacy/ Depersonalization	.181	.023	.364	7.735**
					Constant	4.857	.206		23.608**
					Role Ambiguity/ Efficacy/ Depersonalization	-1.713E-03	.003	-.025	-.555

* $p < 0.01$ ** $p < 0.001$